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DH on Sunday

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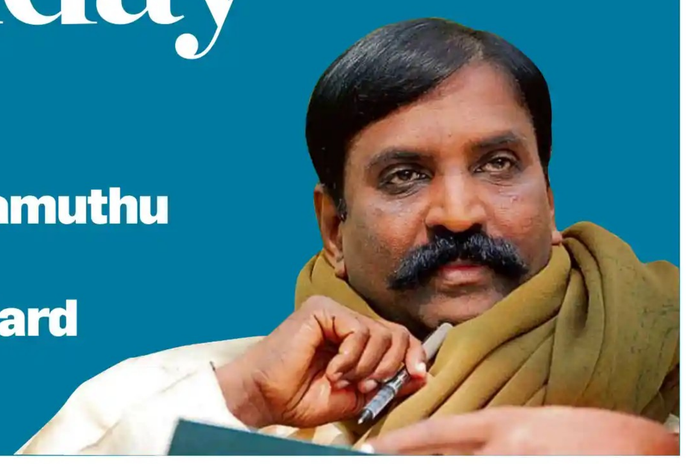
Lyricist Vairamuthu selected for Jnanpith Award



Nations will send warships to Hormuz, claims Trump

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STORE LOCATION

BEHIND THE SCENES Rajya Sabha move sparks speculation on the JD(U) chief's future

From landslide to exit plan: The Nitish puzzle in Bihar

ABHAY KUMAR

In November 2025, the NDA romped home in 202 seats in the 243-member Bihar Assembly. Such a landslide was beyond anyone's imagination. Even Union Home Minister Amit Shah, camping in Patna throughout the polls, had projected that the NDA would win around 160 seats.

The keenly-watched election was contested with Nitish Kumar as the NDA's chief-ministerial face. All the bigwigs — from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Union ministers — sang paeans to the Bihar CM.

Eventually, the BJP emerged as the single-largest party with 89 MLAs in its kitty. However, the JD(U) was not far behind: Its 85-seat win was a much better performance than the 2020 polls, where it was restricted to merely 45 seats.

Undeclared plan

"The BJP, which always had an 'undeclared plan' to upstage Nitish and appoint its own man the Bihar CM, reportedly decided not to replace him immediately even though it was the single largest party," said Giridhar Jha, the editor of a national Hindi-language magazine.

"The reason? The NDA got its mandate by using Nitish's name, and it would not have been prudent to replace the JD(U) strongman who, healthwise, was becoming weak. Such 'deceit' would have given the BJP a bad name," he argued.

Therefore, the saffron camp, even NDA sources aver, decided to wait and watch for the right moment, till after the euphoria over the unexpected win subsided. The Rajya Sabha election — scheduled for this month — gave the BJP that opportunity.

Changing colours

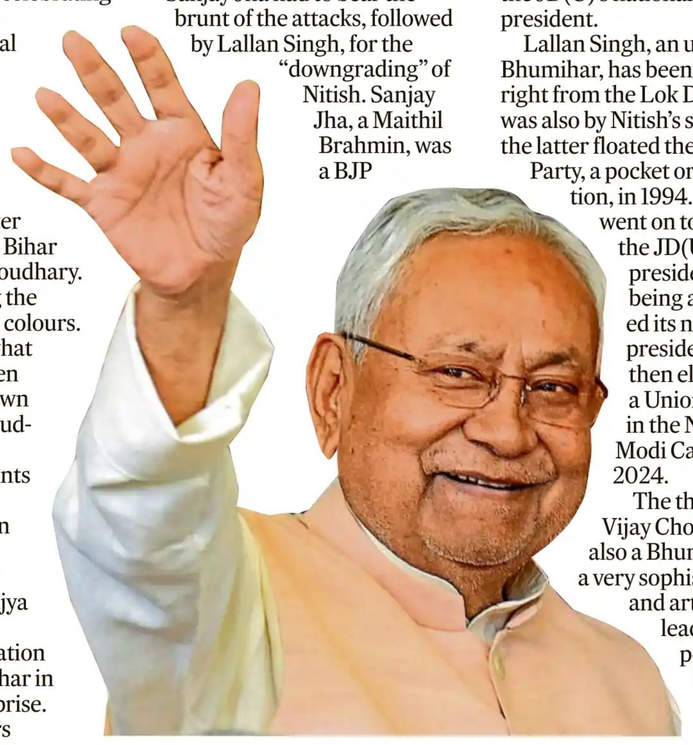
On March 4, when the whole of Bihar was busy celebrating Holi, Nitish was sitting at his official residence and holding confabulations with his closest aides: Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Jha, Union minister Lallan Singh, and Bihar minister Vijay Choudhary. He was preparing the ground to change colours. Though exactly what transpired between them was not known immediately, Choudhary eventually dropped ample hints that Nitish would file his nomination papers on March 5 — the last day to do so — for the Rajya Sabha elections.

This took the nation in general, and Bihar in particular, by surprise. Nitish's supporters rubbed their eyes in disbelief. Many took to the streets, squatted near the CM's residence, staged a dharna, and shouted slogans against Sanjay Jha and Lallan Singh in particular.

Both were accused by Nitish's men of working at the BJP's behest on an agenda to remove Nitish from the CM's post and offer him virtually a retirement posting — a Rajya Sabha berth.

Three peers

Sanjay Jha had to bear the brunt of the attacks, followed by Lallan Singh, for the "downgrading" of Nitish. Sanjay Jha, a Maithil Brahmin, was a BJP MLC when Nitish took the reins of Bihar in 2005. Though not a JD(U) member, Jha used to be Nitish's shadow at every meet.



Originally a protege of Arun Jaitely, with whom Nitish shared a cordial relationship, Jha climbed the ladder and crossed over to the JD(U) before becoming the water resources minister in Nitish's Cabinet. Later, he became a Rajya Sabha member and was rewarded with the post of the JD(U)'s national working president.

Lallan Singh, an upper-caste Bhumihar, has been with Nitish right from the Lok Dal days. He was also by Nitish's side when the latter floated the Samata Party, a pocket organisation, in 1994. Lallan went on to become the JD(U)'s Bihar president before being appointed its national president, and then elevated as a Union minister in the Narendra Modi Cabinet in 2024.

The third aide, Vijay Choudhary — also a Bhumihar and a very sophisticated and articulate leader — is perceived to be the eyes and ears of Nitish, whom the Bihar CM trusts implicitly. Choudhary was in the Congress long ago, but joined the JD(U) strongman during his heydays and became his trusted lieutenant. He went on to become the Bihar Assembly Speaker and later the parliamentary affairs minister. He, too, is considered a shadow of Nitish.

Tempers assuaged

For the first couple of days, numerous protests erupted against the trio. But once Nitish met his MLAs and MPs and narrated the chain of events before giving his final nod for son Nishant Kumar's entry into active politics, tempers were assuaged. The protest subsided once it became clear that Nishant would be the deputy CM.

It is yet to be seen how Nishant will shape up, given the fact that he has a spiritual bent of mind.

"Unlike Chirag Paswan and Tejashwi Yadav, Nishant has never shown eagerness to join politics, nor has he ever shown his ambition or leadership qualities. His sole qualification is that he is Nitish's sole son. However, he could keep the warring JD(U) factions united, just as any Gandhi-family member is the unifying force for the Congress," opined political scientist J N Pandey, who has covered Bihar for three decades.

(The author is a senior Patna-based journalist)

HC quashes order limiting mosque worshippers at 20

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

The Allahabad High Court has quashed an order of the Sambhal district authorities restricting the number of worshippers to 20 in a mosque during Ramzan, stating that it is the state's duty to ensure that the rule of law prevails under every circumstance.

The court observed that the district police chief and the district magistrate should resign or seek a transfer if they feel they are not competent enough to maintain law and order.

A division bench comprising Justices Atul Sreedharan and Siddharth Nandan delivered the ruling recently on a petition filed by one Munazir Khan challenging the Sambhal district administration's order.

"We outrightly reject the contention put forth by the counsel for the state," the court said, while also pulling up the superintendent of police and the district magistrate.

"It is the duty of the state to ensure that every community is able to offer worship peacefully in the designated place of worship and, if it is private property, as has already been held by the court earlier, to perform worship without any permission from the state," the bench said.

"This court has already decided that it is only where prayers or religious functions have to be held on public land or spill over onto public property that the involvement of the state is essential and permission must be sought," it added.

The court fixed March 16 for the next hearing.

ALLAHABAD HIGH COURT

"It is the duty of the State to ensure that the rule of law prevails under every circumstance. If the local authorities i.e. Superintendent of Police and Collector feel that the law and order situation could arise because of which they want to limit the number of worshippers within the premises, they should either resign from their post or seek transfer outside Sambhal

100 stray dogs poisoned to death

HYDERABAD, PTI: In yet another incident of stray dog killings, nearly 100 canines were allegedly "poisoned to death" in Mancherial district, police said.

An animal welfare activist, A Goutham, in a police complaint, stated that on the intervening night of March 7-8, around 100 stray dogs were killed in Kishtapur village.

The complainant accused the sarpanch and gram panchayat secretary of the village of hiring two persons and killing the stray dogs by giving poisonous injections and burying them near a river.

Based on the complaint, a case was registered at Jannaram police station against the sarpanch and GP secretary, the police said.

Kerala govt maintains 2007 stand on women's entry at Sabarimala

Affidavit bats for ritualistic experts to decide on the issue

KOTTAYAM (KERALA), PTI

Devaswom minister says the 2018 verdict came after women lawyers associated with the BJP approached SC. PTI

Kerala Devaswom Minister V N Vasavan on Saturday blamed the BJP for the 2018 Supreme Court verdict permitting women's entry into Sabarimala and said the LDF government's current stand remains the same as the affidavit filed before the apex court in 2007.

He was responding to reporters' queries regarding the affidavit to be filed by the state government before the nine-member bench of the Supreme Court, clarifying its position on the entry of women of menstruating age into the hill shrine.

He said the 2018 verdict came after women lawyers associated with the BJP approached the SC. "We had filed an affidavit in 2007 stating that the issue should be decided by experts in ritualistic matters. We are still maintaining that stand," he said.

The SC has not sought the state government's position on women's entry now, but has asked for clarification on certain constitutional issues, he added. "We have assigned the Advocate General and constitutional experts in the SC to give the reply. They will respond accordingly," the minister said.

He added that if the court seeks the state government's stand on the matter, it would be presented, noting that the LDF government had already stated its position in the affidavit filed in 2007.

"The party's (CPM) stand is the same as the government's. The government is with the devotees. We have always been with the devotees," he said.

Asked about the state government's actions in 2018 following the SC verdict allowing women of all ages to enter Sabarimala, he said no such interpretation should be made as the government had already clarified its stand in the 2007 affidavit.

"If the SC gives any verdict, can we say anything against it. The women's entry was the decision of the apex court of the country," he said.

He denied allegations that the state government had taken special interest in facilitating the entry of women of menstruating age into Sabarimala in 2018.

The Supreme Court in 2018 permitted women of menstruating age to enter the Sabarimala temple, following which Kerala witnessed widespread protests.

Meanwhile, BJP state general secretary M T Ramesh said the Kerala government has admitted its mistake through the new affidavit filed in the SC on the Sabarimala women's entry issue. "The BJP demands that the state government apologise to Ayyappa devotees," he said.

He said that in 2018, the CM had strongly advocated reforms and asked why the government had now changed its position.

'Pandit' option in UP Police exam sparks backlash

LUCKNOW, PTI

The question "Who changes according to the opportunity?" in an Uttar Pradesh Police recruitment examination has triggered a controversy after one of the options listed in the written paper was "Pandit", prompting objections from leaders within the ruling BJP.

The state BJP secretary on Saturday wrote to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath raising objection to the question, while Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak said instructions have been issued for an immediate investigation into the entire matter.

In the examination conducted on March 14 for the recruitment of sub-inspectors, candidates had to choose the correct one-word answer in the Hindi section for a person who changes according to the opportunity. The options were: "Pandit", "Opportunist", "Innocent" and "Virtuous".

Uttar Pradesh BJP secretary Abhijat Mishra, who belongs to the Brahmin community, sought action against those responsible for setting the paper in his letter to the chief minister.

Mishra said the question appeared to be incorrectly framed and insensitive. "The correct meaning of a person who changes according to the opportunity is 'opportunist', but including 'Pandit' among the options hurts the sentiments of a particular community," he said.

"'Pandit' is a term associated with knowledge and religious respect. Linking it with opportunism is inappropriate, insensitive and may have been done deliberately," Mishra said.

The controversy comes on the heels of the alleged mistreatment of Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati during Magh Mela in Prayagraj, following which the opposition parties accused the BJP government of being "anti-Brahmin".

Against this backdrop, the latest issue threatens to snowball into yet another political controversy, particularly as the objection has come from leaders of the ruling party itself.

Mishra urged the state government to order an immediate departmental inquiry against members of the committee responsible for setting the question paper and to take strict action if any lapse is found.

Pathak asserted that no place should be given to derogatory words against any caste, community or tradition, adding that instructions have been issued for an immediate investigation into the entire matter.

Strict action will be taken against the responsible individuals, the deputy chief minister said.

BRAJESH PATHAK
UP Deputy Chief Minister

"We have strong objections to the options provided for a question that appeared in the Uttar Pradesh Police recruitment examination. The government has taken note of this matter with utmost seriousness. It is absolutely unacceptable for any question to hurt the dignity of any society or class.

Tamil writer Vairamuthu conferred with Jnanpith

CHENNAI, DHNS: Popular Tamil writer and film lyricist Vairamuthu was on Saturday conferred with Jnanpith, considered the country's highest literary award, becoming only the third writer from Tamil Nadu to receive the honour.

Vairamuthu

Vairamuthu, who has won seven national awards for his lyrics and was conferred with Padma Sri and Padma Bhushan in the past, has been a controversial figure with several women, including playback singer Chinmayi Sripada, accusing him of sexual harassment.

He is the only third writer from Tamil Nadu to be conferred with Jnanpith after Akhilan in 1975 and Jayakanthan in 2002.

The lyricist-writer has written over 40 books and penned lyrics for over 7,500 songs.

Unban CPI (Maoist), recognise it politically: Surrendered leader

HYDERABAD, PTI: CPI (Maoist) leader Thippiri Tirupati, alias Devuji, who recently surrendered before the Telangana Police, on Saturday demanded that the Central government lift the ban on the outfit and recognise it as a political party, though the organisation does not favour participating in electoral politics.

Thippiri Tirupati

Speaking to PTI, he said his outfit was ready to lay down arms if it was recognised as a legal political party.

"We requested the Chief Minister (A Revanth Reddy, during a recent meeting) to bring the matter to the notice of the Centre (about lifting the ban). The chief minister responded positively and spoke to the Union Home Minister. They say that only the government should have arms, and not others. We also say that we will hand over arms if our party is recognised as a legal party," he said.

The CPI (Maoist) suffered losses as many Maoists were either arrested, or they died or surrendered after the Centre's anti-Maoist "Operation Kagar" started, he said.

In the wake of the anti-Maoist operations, survival itself was a priority for the organisation, he said.

Devuji said he does not want to join any party as the CPI (Maoist) itself is a political outfit.

"The CPI (Maoist) is a political party. We brought it to the CM's notice to lift the ban on the organisation," he said.

He also demanded the release of Maoist sympathisers jailed across the country under the label of "urban naxals" or others by recognising them as "political prisoners".

"We don't want to enter the path of ballot. It is the path of ballot if we participate in the parliament and assembly elections. We don't want to participate in parliament and assembly polls," he told TV channels here.

IN BRIEF

CBI quizzes Anil Ambani's son in bank fraud case

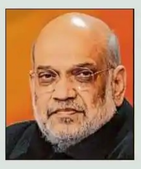
NEW DELHI, PTI: The CBI questioned Anil Ambani's son, Jai Anmol Ambani, for nearly five hours for a second consecutive day on Saturday in connection with an alleged Rs 228-crore fraud involving the Union Bank of India, officials said.

Jai Anmol Ambani

The CBI had acted on a complaint from the Union Bank of India (previously, the Andhra Bank), alleging that the company did not repay the credit availed from the bank, which turned the account into a non-performing asset in 2019.

BJP to go solo in Punjab: Shah

MOGA (PUNJAB), PTI: Union Minister Amit Shah on Saturday asserted that the BJP will fight the 2027 polls on its own, aiming to form its government in Punjab, where it had only been a junior partner to SAD, and promised to bring an anti-conversion law and end the drug menace in the state, urging voters to give the party one opportunity to bring change.



Amit Shah

Sounding the poll bugle at a "Badlav" (change) rally in Moga, Shah said the people of the state have given many chances to Congress, Akalis and AAP, but these parties could not deliver.

"Today, Punjab has been destroyed due to debt, drugs, religious conversions, corruption and terror of gangsters," Shah said.

HIV-positive groom attacks woman

HYDERABAD, PTI: A 24-year-old man allegedly injected HIV-infected blood into a 22-year-old woman after her parents called off their wedding upon discovering he was HIV positive, police said on Saturday.

The incident occurred on March 11 at the victim's house, where the accused forcibly administered the blood. The accused and the victim are relatives, and her parents had initially planned the marriage.

Following routine testing in September last year, prompted by the fact that the man's parents were HIV positive, the man was found to be HIV positive, leading the woman's father to cancel the wedding.

A police official said the man allegedly carried out the attack believing the woman would marry him regardless.

SIT formed to probe attack on NC chief

JAMMU, PTI: Jammu and Kashmir Police have constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the recent assassination attempt on National Conference president Farooq Abdullah here, officials said on Saturday.

Farooq Abdullah

Jammu Zone Inspector General of Police (IGP) Bhim Sen Tuti ordered the setting up of the SIT under the supervision of a deputy inspector general of police Jammu-Samba-Kathua range, considering the "seriousness and sensitivity" of the case.

On Wednesday night, Abdullah had a miraculous escape when a gunman opened fire on him after coming from behind while he was leaving a marriage function.

3 die in Odisha elephant attack

PHULBANI (ODISHA), PTI: Three persons were trampled to death by separate herds of elephants in the jungles of Kandhamal district, forest officials said on Saturday.

While two persons died at Damba forest in Petapanfa gram panchayat on Friday evening, another man met the same fate at Paburia forest on Saturday morning. All three had gone to the forest to collect firewood.

The incidents sparked panic in the G Udaygiri area, where people prefer to remain indoors, fearing elephant attack.

They alleged that the forest department did not alert the people about the movement of jumbo herds through their area.

CPM urges Centre to withdraw new trans-rights Bill

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The CPM on Saturday asked the Narendra Modi government to withdraw a Bill seeking to amend the law on transgender rights by disallowing self-determination of gender identity, claiming it was aimed at imposing a "rigid, Brahmanical concept of gender and social order" and "systematically" dismantling the limited protections given to them.

The government introduced the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, in the Lok Sabha on Friday, omitting the provision for recognition of self-perceived gender identities, but including a definition requiring certification by a medical board headed by a chief medical officer (CMO).

A CPM Polit Bureau member said in a statement that the Bill was an "assault on the constitutional rights" of transgender persons.

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Wangchuk out of jail after 6 months as NSA revoked

Centre signals intention to take forward dialogue

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Activist Sonam Wangchuk on Saturday walked out of a Jodhpur jail after spending nearly six months behind bars under the National Security Act following violence during protests in Ladakh over statehood demand. The Union government's decision to set the popular activist free by revoking the contentious Act against him is seen as a signal that it has reached some understanding on taking forward the dialogue and to provide "necessary safeguards" to the Union Territory.

Announcing the decision to release Wangchuk through an official statement, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said it remains hopeful that the issues concerning the region will be resolved through constructive engagement and dialogue, including through the mechanism of the High-Powered Committee.

Station House Officer of Jodhpur's Ratanada police station Dinesh Lakhawat said Wangchuk was released from jail at around 1.30 pm.

The decision came ahead of the March 17 hearing in the Supreme Court on a plea against his detention.

Wangchuk was arrested under the stringent NSA on September 26 last year, two days after violence erupted in Leh during his indefinite hunger strike, and has been lodged in a jail in Rajasthan's Jodhpur.

The MHA statement said Wangchuk was detained "against the backdrop of serious law and order situation that arose in the peace-loving town of Leh" with a "view to maintaining public order" and he has "already undergone nearly half of the period" of detention under the NSA.

So far, the government has been opposing his bail application in the apex court.

While the MHA has not promised statehood as demanded by Wangchuk and protesters, it said the government has been actively engaging with various stakeholders and community leaders in Ladakh with a view to addressing the aspirations and concerns of the people of the region.

The protesters had been demanding that Ladakh be put under Schedule 6 of the Constitution.

The MHA further said the prevailing atmosphere of bandhs and protests has been detrimental to the peace-loving character of the society and has adversely affected various sections of the community, including students, job aspirants, businesses, tour operators and tourists and the overall economy. "The government remains committed to fostering an environment of peace, stability, and mutual trust in Ladakh so as to facilitate constructive and meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders," the MHA said.

"In furtherance of this objective, and after due consideration, the government has decided to revoke the detention of Shri Sonam Wangchuk with immediate effect by exercising the powers available under the National Security Act," it said.

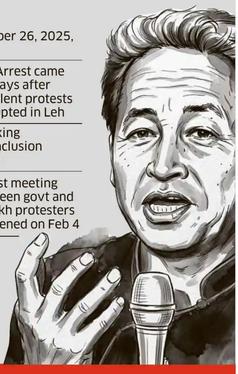
Ahead of Wangchuk's arrest last year, the MHA had blamed him for the Leh violence, claiming that he was misleading people through "provocative mention" of Arab Spring-style protest and "references to Gen Z protests in Nepal".

It said the mob was incited by his "provocative statements" while he was on a hunger strike demanding statehood and constitutional safeguards for the UT.

Four people were killed in police firing and 60 others injured during protests that saw attacks on a government building and a BJP office.

A day after the protest, the MHA also said that it has cancelled the licence of Wangchuk-founded 'Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh' (SECMOL) to collect foreign donations with "immediate effect", claiming violation of laws in handling Rs 9.81 lakh in 2021-22.

Activist's saga



1. Detained on September 26, 2025, under the NSA
2. Arrest order was issued by Leh district magistrate
3. Arrest came 2 days after violent protests erupted in Leh
4. Protesters were seeking statehood to Ladakh, inclusion under the 6th Schedule
5. Wangchuk was kept in Jodhpur Central Jail
6. Last meeting between govt and Ladakh protesters happened on Feb 4
7. Protesters had sought release of Wangchuk as one of their demands
8. Release comes ahead of March 17 hearing in SC on a plea against his detention

> The government remains committed to fostering an environment of peace, stability, and mutual trust in Ladakh so as to facilitate constructive and meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders.
>
> Ministry of Home Affairs

Oppn targets Union govt

The Opposition denounced the Centre for jailing Wangchuk on "completely bogus grounds". The Congress said the government should apologise not just to Wangchuk and his family, but also to the people of Ladakh. AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal said the case mirrors the treatment meted out to his party's leadership in the Delhi liquor policy case. "The Modi government stands exposed once again," he said.

15 honour killing cases reported in state in 5 years

RASHMI BELUR
BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka has reported a total of 15 honour killing cases in the last five years.

The state government revealed this just a day after the Cabinet cleared the "Iva Nammava Iva Nammava Bill" aimed at curbing honour killings and violence rooted in social customs, motivated by objections to marriages.

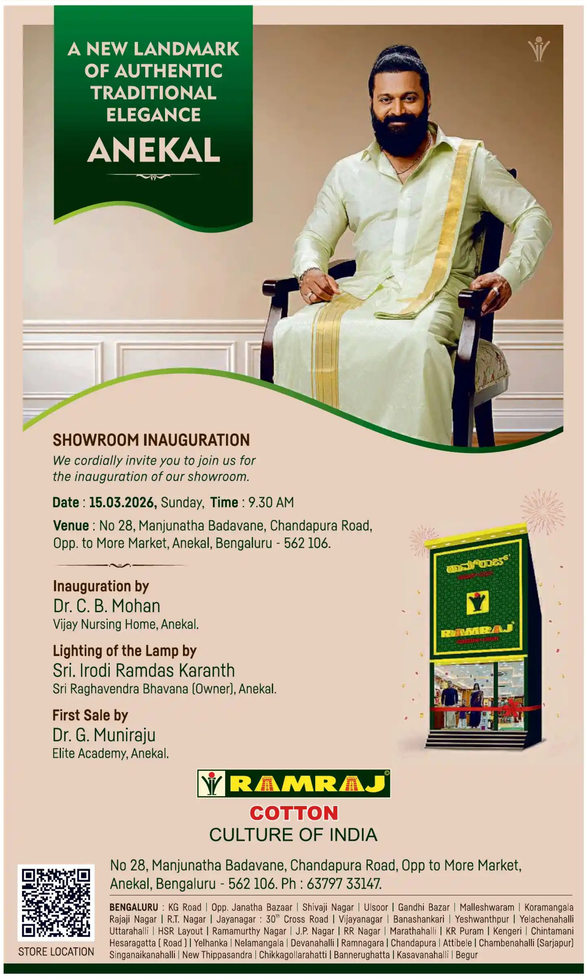
Parameshwara

Home Minister G Parameshwara provided this information in the Legislative Council in a reply to the question by BJP MLC Kishore Kumar Putturu. Though the government said it would provide district-wise honour killing cases, details were missing in the written reply.

MLC Putturu said, "I have not even received the physical copy of the reply. Surprisingly, it was a starred question, but was converted to an un-starred one."

"My query demanded a detailed answer, including number of cases, people arrested, details of chargesheets submitted to the court and district wise details of the honour killing cases. No details were provided. Though the reply said the abstract was attached with district wise data, no such abstract was found or provided," he said.

▸ Honour killing, Page 7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Lighting of the Lamp by
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First Sale by
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Vendors welcome FSSAI reform, but ID gaps persist

Move seeks to reduce regulatory overlap in food vending

KORAH ABRAHAM
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Union government's decision to ease food safety compliance for street food vendors has been welcomed by vendors in the city, but many say the reform will have little practical impact unless the city first resolves long-pending issues around identity cards and vendor committees.

On Friday, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) approved regulatory changes allowing street food vendors registered with municipal bodies or town vending committees to operate without a separate FSSAI licence. Vendors registered under the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, will be treated as "deemed registered" under food safety regulations.

The move, announced by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, is expected to benefit over 10 lakh vendors nationwide by reducing paperwork and eliminating the need for multiple registrations.

However, street vendors say the reform may not translate into relief on the ground.

"The reform is welcome because it reduces the compliance burden," said S Babu, president of the Federation of Bengaluru District Street Vendors Association. "But it assumes that vendors are already recognised by the local authorities. In Bengaluru, that basic step itself has not happened."

In Fraser Town, food cart vendor Jabbar said the announcement sounded promising, but the reality in the city remained unchanged. "It is good that the government is reducing licences and paperwork," he said. "But what is the use if we don't even have the basic ID cards from the city authorities? Without those, we are still treated as illegal."

Another concern is the absence of a functioning Town Vending Committee, the statutory body responsible for identifying vendors, issuing vending certificates and regulating vending zones under the 2014 Act.

Vendors say several safeguards promised under the law remain on paper in the absence of a functioning committee.

Vendor associations say the previous committee's tenure ended in 2020 and a fresh elected body has yet to be constituted. Without a functioning committee, vendors argue, several safeguards promised under the law remain on paper.

'Welcome move'

Meanwhile, advocate Vinay Sreenivasa, a member of the street vendors' unions, said the reform was a positive step because it reduced overlapping regulations and allowed food vending to be regulated more locally.

"It's good that they said it's not necessary for street vendors to take an FSSAI licence," he told *DH*. "If any changes in rules are required, it becomes easier for us to engage with the municipality. Food and such issues should ideally be regulated locally."

He added that different cities and states often have different realities when it comes to street food.

"Regulation of food should not always come from Delhi. Rajasthan might have certain conditions, Tamil Nadu might have others for urban street food. Why should someone sitting in Delhi decide the rules for everyone?" he said.

Sreenivasa also noted that the move eliminates unnecessary duplication of regulatory oversight.

"There is actually no need for double regulation in this sector. FSSAI may say one thing and the city municipality may say something else. Removing that overlap is a good policy decision," he said.

Social media linked to anxiety, anger among children: Survey

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

Parents in the city have flagged rising anxiety, sleeping, and anger issues among children aged 9–17 years as a result of social media usage in a new survey.

The recent survey by Local Circles revealed that 47% of the surveyed participants in Bengaluru shared that children aged between 9 and 17 years in their family had been exposed to inappropriate and adult content in the past 12 months. Additionally, another 41% pointed out that kids in their family had faced the risk of AI-based photo/video morphing and deepfake misuse.

The survey, with over 11,000 responses from Bengaluru, also pointed out that 31% of the kids had faced online bullying or trolling by peers, 29% faced threats of blackmail and coercion, and 33% had either been harassed or received abusive messages from strangers. 21% had also faced the risk of online scams or fraud specifically targeting children.

About 41% of those surveyed indicated that kids in their family had experienced fear and anxiety due to unpleasant online experiences, while 59% experienced sleep issues or reduced concentration and 61% portrayed anger or aggressive behaviour.

The Karnataka government has proposed banning social media for children under 16 years to protect them from harmful online content and excessive screen time. Announced in the 2026–27 state budget by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, the move aims to reduce digital addiction, cyberbullying and mental health risks among minors, though implementation details and enforcement methods are still under discussion. Mental health experts remain in favour of the ban despite being unsure of how it would be implemented.

"I have been seeing a worrying rise in anxiety among early teens and even pre-teens, often linked to online comparison, cyberbullying and constant exposure to unrealistic lifestyles on social media. Limiting access at a young age may reduce stress, improve emotional regulation, and allow adolescents to develop healthier self-esteem and real-world social connections," said Krithika Jain, a psychologist.

Currently, some of the common mental health problems among children are anxiety, addiction and ADHD, mental health professionals said.

Psychotherapist Kala Balasubramanian pointed to the three major concerns parents who visit her have about social media and children — bullying, exposure to inappropriate content and addiction.

"Now, when kids are addicted to social media, parents are unable to help children move away from social media because they themselves exposed the kids to the internet at a very young age. Kids as young as six months old are being exposed to phone screens and the internet," she said, adding that mere government intervention would not suffice and highlighting the need for improved awareness among parents.

A whopping 78% of the parents and family members who took the survey believed that children were the most vulnerable to bullying, harassment or exploitation on social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, Discord and BeReal, while 41% also highlighted the risks of online gaming platforms and in-game chats.

The surveyed individuals also highlighted the need for better reporting mechanisms on online platforms and vouched for a national helpline or portal for reporting child online safety complaints.

Teen falls to death while shooting social media reel

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 15-year-old boy died after falling from an abandoned building while reportedly attempting a photoshoot with friends in Annapurneshwarinagar.

The deceased has been identified as Nishanth, a resident of Jnanabharathi.

A senior police officer said the incident occurred around 5.30 pm on Friday when Nishanth, along with his two friends, had gone to an abandoned Ranya Resort, which has been lying unused for nearly 15 years, for a photoshoot. While his friends were standing on the ground, Nishanth reportedly climbed atop a dilapidated structure and asked them to take his photos.

He was walking backwards to make reels when he lost his balance and fell from a height of about 40 feet, sustaining severe injuries. His friends rushed him to a nearby hospital where he was declared brought dead.

Based on a complaint filed by the victim's father, Sri Harsha, Annapoorneshwari Nagar police have registered a case of unnatural death and further investigation is on.

Nishanth had written his Class 10 exams a week ago. He was active on social media, posting reels and personal photos, police added.

RPF conducts training to improve passenger safety

BENGALURU, DHNS: A comprehensive one-day training programme on Quick Reaction Team (QRT) operations and crowd management was conducted by the Railway Protection Force (RPF), Bengaluru Division.

The objective of the training was to enhance the operational preparedness, tactical response capability, and crowd management skills of RPF personnel, particularly in view of the large passenger movement witnessed at railway stations and on trains. The programme also aimed at strengthening coordination between the RPF and specialised central armed police forces such as RAF/CRPF during emergencies, law and order situations, and mass gathering scenarios.

The training sessions included both theoretical briefings and practical demonstrations, covering various critical aspects related to crowd management and emergency response.

Women leaders share journeys of resilience at conclave

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Department of Computer Science, School of Computational and Physical Sciences of Kristu Jayanti (Deemed to be University) hosted an organised 'Women Conclave' around the theme 'Voices of Strength, Leadership and Legacy'.

Speaking on the occasion, Rev Fr Dr Lijo P Thomas, Pro Vice Chancellor, Kristu Jayanti (Deemed to be University), highlighted the contributions of historic women leaders and reformers. He spoke at length about the immense strength women demonstrate in overcoming challenges, and described the conclave as a celebration of women's resilience, leadership and enduring impact.

Students and participants attend the 'Women Conclave' themed Voices of Strength, Leadership and Legacy organised by the Department of Computer Science at Kristu Jayanti (Deemed to be University) in Bengaluru.

The keynote speakers were Bineesha Payattati, Executive Director – IIWM; Poornima Dhall, Global Partnerships and Alliances; Anusha Srivatsan, Director at Oracle; Anuradha Vridagiri, Director at Rangsons Aerospace Ltd; Archana Vishwanath, Director at Jain Heritage School; Dr Kavitha Papanna, Director at Bangalore North Hospital; and Karunya Gunavathy K, CEO of Kottravai. In their speeches, they emphasised courage, empathy, passion and perseverance in leadership.

A panel discussion titled "From Aspiration to Achievement: Women Leaders in Conversation," moderated by Payattati, highlighted turning points in leadership journeys, embracing failure, seeking support systems, and confidently speaking up.

Bengaluru Sunday, March 15, 2026 Pages 24 Vol 79 No 74 ₹8

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P11

Big Picture

Gen Z's god moment

Beats over booze, bliss over hangovers. Why are youngsters saying no to strobe lights and choosing bhajan clubbing instead?

16 Page

Pan-India dreams and Kannada cinema realities

When filmmakers only templatise the last big hit, they neglect the wealth of intimate cinematic possibilities in their midst

S R RAMAKRISHNA & PRANATI A S
BENGALURU, DHNS

Kannada cinema, with a history of 92 years, is grappling with a new dilemma — should it cater to the pan-India expectations generated by blockbuster hits such as *KGF* and *Kantara*, or make less expensive cinema with better box office prospects in Karnataka?

In the six years since the gangster drama *KGF* hit the screens, many filmmakers in Karnataka have attempted richly mounted, big canvas productions, with national and international audiences in mind. Not many have succeeded, and the focus on scale has created a void in an industry otherwise conservative in its spending.

Single screen theatres are banking on re-releases. The re-release of Puneeth Rajkumar's 'Appu' in 2025 and 'Jackie' in 2024 witnessed houseful shows and contributed significantly to the revenue, according to reports. DH FILE PHOTO

INSIGHT

The industry is paying a hidden price for its obsession with pan-Indian cinema, many insiders told *DH*. The sequels to *KGF* and *Kantara* (in the latter case, the story goes back in time from where the first film began) have continued their winning streak at the box office, but most other ambitious ventures have tanked.

Kabzaa (2023), starring Shivarajkumar, Upendra and Sudeep, and *45* (2025), starring Shivarajkumar, Upendra and Raj B Shetty, are just two of the many films that came in the wake of the big hits and lost their way. Some films have fared so poorly that their producers have sworn off films for life.

Of the 253 Kannada films produced in 2025, only a handful have recovered their investments. The numbers were equally discouraging in 2024, with just 10-12 moderate grossers and almost no big hits. Film production is always a gamble, but when the odds are so bleak, the enthusiasm for creative risks takes a hit.

Ravichandra A J, producer of the sleeper hit *Blink* (2024), believes production houses with deep pockets — for example, Hombale Films, which made *KGF Chapter 1* and *2* — should not remain wedded to lavish spectacles. "They should back young filmmakers," says Ravichandra, who has distributed *Shakhahari* and *Second Case of Seetharam*, films with tight budgets. The theatrical success of *Blink*, a sci-fi shot with theatre actors on a shoestring budget, brought hope. While most films pitched to pan-Indian audiences failed, *Blink* went from being hyper-local to becoming pan-Indian, finding love on OTT. It was dubbed into six Indian languages and released on Amazon Prime.

A producer who requests anonymity believes the gloom can be dispelled by enlightened project choices. "When an industry is in distress, production houses must make films with reasonable budgets, say with Rs 50 lakh to Rs 100 crore. An industry needs films made at different budget points. In Telugu, six or seven production houses are actively making all kinds of films. Mythri Movie Makers, for example, makes a Rs 500 crore film and follows it up with a Rs 5 crore film."

The production numbers are high mainly because of Karnataka's subsidy policy.

▸ Kannada cinema, Page 2

Defence outlays rise amid mounting debt

As civilian stimulus tools weaken, advanced economies turn to rearmament as a macroeconomic stabiliser

VIDHU SHEKHAR

Governments across the developed world can barely afford to stimulate their economies. Yet they are expanding defence spending at the fastest pace since the late 1980s.

Global growth remains weak, hovering near 3% despite years of extraordinary policy support. Household balance sheets are stretched, corporate investment is subdued and fiscal space is narrowing. However, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute released in April 2025, global military expenditure reached a record $2.7 trillion in 2024, rising more than 9% in real terms over 2023, the steepest annual increase in nearly four decades. This surge has occurred not during a boom, but amid stagnation and tightening fiscal constraints.

Geopolitics explains part of the story. Wars, strategic rivalry and a deteriorating security environment have pushed governments to rearm. Yet security conditions alone do not fully explain why rearmament is increasing across economies with different strategic positions and exposure to conflict.

Global military expenditure reached a record $2.7 trillion in 2024. PTI

The SUNDAY STORY

A deeper structural driver appears to be at work. One established response to economic stagnation is Keynesian policy, named after the economist John Maynard Keynes, in which governments step in with public spending to counter weakened private demand. As traditional engines of civilian growth lose traction, defence spending is emerging as a macroeconomic stabiliser of last resort. What we are witnessing is the quiet return of military Keynesianism — not as ideology or coordinated doctrine, but as the default response of debt-saturated economies that have exhausted their conventional policy tools.

For decades, downturns were managed through familiar Keynesian tools: fiscal stimulus and monetary easing, bridging demand until private activity recovered. Today, that transmission mechanism is increasingly impaired. Across the US, Europe and China, households are heavily leveraged. In the US, household debt remains close to historic highs relative to income. In much of Europe, elevated mortgage exposure constrains discretionary consumption. In China, years of property-led growth have sharply increased household debt, leaving consumption persistently weak despite repeated policy support.

▸ Defence spending, Page 2

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Quickly

Trump: Send ships to secure Hormuz

US President Donald Trump on Saturday urged other nations to send ships to help secure the Strait of Hormuz, the critical chokepoint for global oil supplies disrupted by the West Asia war. In a post on Truth Social, Trump claimed many countries will be sending warships.
Details on Page 3

'LDF govt backs 2007 affidavit on Sabarimala'

Kerala Devaswom Minister V N Vasavan said the government's stand in the Sabarimala women entry case remains the same as the affidavit filed before the apex court in 2007. "We had filed an affidavit stating the issue should be decided by experts in ritualistic matters. We are maintaining that stand," he said.

Limiting masjid worshippers: HC bins order

The Allahabad HC has quashed an order of the Sambhal district authorities restricting the number of worshippers to 20 in a mosque during Ramzan. The court said the district police chief and the district magistrate should resign or seek a transfer if they feel they can't maintain law and order.

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Art & Pursuits *Page 20*

Worth the wait
After more than two decades of delays and crises, the Grand Egyptian Museum has finally opened, and it does not disappoint

Travel *Page 18*

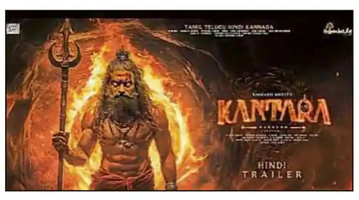
Tales from Awadh
From ornate arches to stately mansions and street food, Lucknow offers a platter of many delights

Food & Drink *Page 19*

Highly sober
A growing number of millennials are opting for zero-proof cocktails with botanical spirits, spices and bitters

In nearly a decade, just three Kannada films hit one crore footfalls

KGF: Chapter 2 (2022)
Footfalls: 5.5 crore

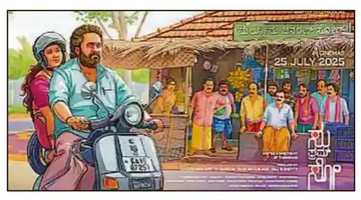


Kantara: Chapter 1 (2025)
Footfalls 3.2 crore

Kantara (2022)
Footfalls: 1 crore

KGF: Chapter 1 (2018)
Footfalls: 75 lakh

Raajakumara (2017)
Footfalls: 65 lakh



Su from So (2025)
Footfalls: 40 lakh

Subsidy as a double-edged sword

Kannada cinema from Page 1

More than 200 films are made every year, many with an eye on the subsidy rather than the box office. The government gives subsidies to 100-125 films a year, with each film getting Rs 10 lakh. Subsidies have hit a road block though. Citing a financial crunch, the government hasn't given subsidies from 2018-19. Just last week, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah promised to clear the dues, and the talk is that, going forward, subsidies will be discontinued.

Amid the despondency, cinema from the Karnataka coast has driven home many telling points. *Su from So* (2025), scripted and directed by J P Thuminad, did not bank on big promotions; instead, it went entirely by word of mouth. The comedy, produced by Raj B Shetty's Lighter Buddha Films, drove home an anti-superstition message, and became the second-highest grosser of the year. Rare hits of the past couple of years, such as *Su from So*, owe their success to their writing, and not so much to stars or big banners.

Actor-producer Dhananjaya K A believes actors and producers who have reaped the fruits of blockbuster hits should encourage younger filmmakers from diverse backgrounds, and that is the way to keep the industry ticking.

He tasted success as an actor with *Tagaru* (2018) and the Telugu hit *Pushpa: The Rise* (2021), and set up Daali Pictures in 2021 with the objective of promoting fresh talent. His productions *Badava Rascal* (2021) and *Tagaru Palya* (2023) impressed audiences with their storytelling strength and production compactness.

Craft of writing

Some filmmakers such as Rishab Shetty assert, and rightly so, that truly local stories can have universal appeal, but the lens is blurred when an entire industry begins to chase pan-India dreams. As film critic Swaroop Kodur says, stories are no longer rooted when an industry is obsessed with catering to huge, imaginary audiences.

A consequence is that films blindly follow other films, with no attention being paid to original writing. When a film is structured exactly like last year's hit, it is more redundancy than inspiration. *Kabzaa* came out of *KGF*, and so many Kantaras are still in the making.

Formulaic films have existed since the beginning of cinema, and certain tropes are indispensable in storytelling, but for a film to be fresh, filmmakers trying to break the mould say, it must draw from contemporary realities. "Big films have always captured our imagination, but we are at a point when we are exhausted by the hype. There is so much to deal with in real life, and then we have a visual overload because of social media, and so increasingly, cinema is taking a backseat," Kodur says.

In Karnataka, unlike in neighbouring Kerala, the literary community has remained distant from the film industry. Some Kannada directors, such as Puttanna Kanagal, were aware of literary works, and often based their films on novels and their songs on the poetry of the greats, but that was another era. With some exceptions, most filmmakers in current Kannada cinema are oblivious to the wealth of possibilities in contemporary literary writing.

Aravind Kaushik, director of offbeat films *Nam Areal Ond Dina* (2010) and *Tughlaq* (2012), says the industry lacks filmmakers who see their art as a medium to express their unique perspectives. "Instead, the focus has shifted towards market-driven content, prioritising entertainment and box office success over meaningful storytelling. This disconnect leads to inflated budgets and a loss of connection between the film and its audience," he says.

Ticket pricing

Multiplex culture, with its premium ticket pricing, is designed for big-budget films, and so it is detrimental to smaller, independent cinema, he says, advocating a curated distribution system that works on the lines of film festivals and cinema clubs. A ticket should ideally be priced below Rs 200, and that would make cinema more accessible and democratic, Kaushik says.

Producers are flooded with pitches, and they see a pattern. "Every director wants to make a pan-India film. Out here, Kannada audiences have lost trust in the industry. We have to first gain their trust back. We have to understand the market here and the focus should be on the market here. Instead, everyone is after the 'pan-India' market," says a producer. Talking about the Arjun Janya directorial *45*, a multi-starrer produced by Ramesh Reddy that fizzled out at the box office, he says, "Good producers sadly are falling into the wrong hands."

Ravichandra believes that nothing may come out of the Rs 200 ceiling on tickets in the short term. As a marketing strategy, *Second Case of Seetharam*, a slick police procedural starring Vijay Raghavendra, opened preview shows for Re 1. And yet the halls remained empty, he says. Subsequent reports said the film had picked up and was doing well in Tamil Nadu. Ravichandra argues that the ceiling on ticket rates, if implemented, will create a more democratic cinema viewing culture in the future. A production house in Bengaluru is contesting in court the Siddaramaiah government's decision to cap ticket rates at Rs 200.

Cinema as 'content'

Where writing is concerned, Kaushik underlines the importance of the individual voice: "Any form of art including cinema becomes a product later. It is primarily an expression of who the artist is." The market for mass-produced 'content' reaches a point of saturation, and that is where the Kannada film industry is at today, he says.

"We have to up our game as far as storytelling is concerned. Filmmaking in itself is not very difficult today. So the primary question we have to ask ourselves is why we are making a film. Everyone is running behind big budgets, where every actor aims to become a star and every movie aims to become a pan-Indian movie," he says.

Insiders agree the industry is facing numerous challenges — the inability to invest in writing, the refusal to accept failure, and a focus on short-term gain rather than long-term consistency.

A new problem is the paranoia that has gripped filmmakers when their productions are panned by critics. Many production houses orchestrate a positive reception for their films by paying TV and social media channels for promotions. The first three days after a release are crucial for a film's success, and many producers set aside money to create a buzz. Sometimes, they end up blaming independent critics for the failure of their films.

OTT challenges

A season of misselling may have created a crisis of credibility for Kannada films when it comes to OTT. "They treat calls from Kannada productions like credit card spam calls," a filmmaker says. When hyped films, sold to OTT in 2023 at fantastic rates, fared miserably at the theatres, the OTT bosses became wary.

Amazon Prime Video now follows a pay per view model for Kannada films — Rs 4 per hour of viewing. If a viewer watches a full film, the producer gets Rs 10. Netflix buys outright streaming rights for Telugu and Hindi films, and JioHotstar is picking up films in Tamil, Telugu Malayalam and Hindi. Zee buys both streaming and satellite rights of films that have performed well in theatres.

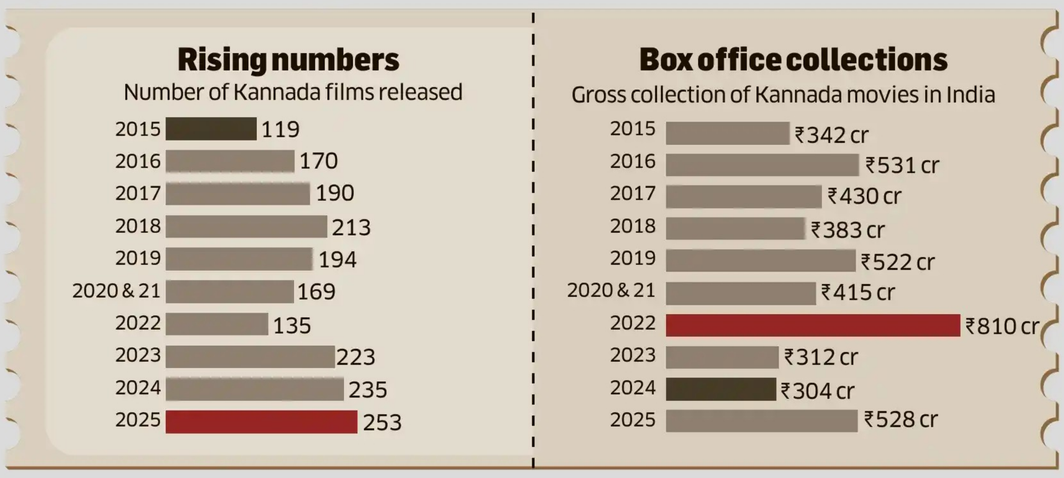
The argument that Kannada cinema has a limited market is often countered by hits that defy the odds, and film buffs recall fondly how, when Rajkumar, Vishnuvardhan, Ananth Nag, Shankar Nag, Srinath and Ambarish were delivering commercial hits, a cinema inspired by literature emerged parallelly. The industry is at such a crossroads all over again.

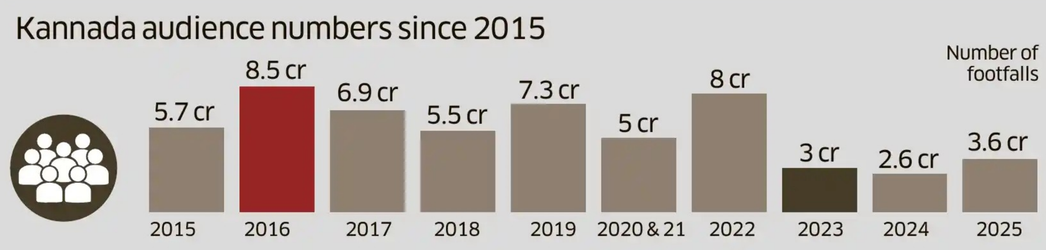
A LONG SHOT OF KANNADA CINEMA

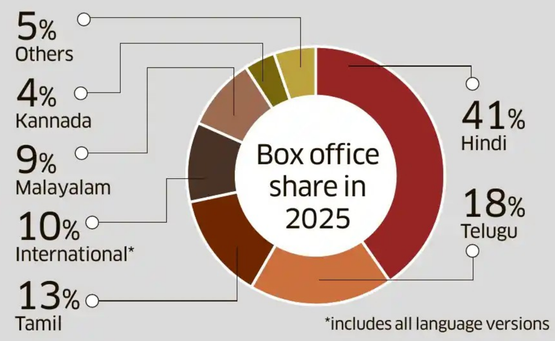
The Kannada film industry—also referred to as Sandalwood—has had **6,000**+ releases in **92 years** since the first Kannada talkie Sati Savitri was released in 1934

Over the past 10 years, Kannada films have contributed **4.8%** to India's total box office, against Telugu (18%), Tamil (14.3%), Malayalam (6.7%), and Hindi (40.4%)

In 2025, Kannada films recorded strong growth, despite the combined box office share of the four south Indian languages **declining to 44% from 48%**







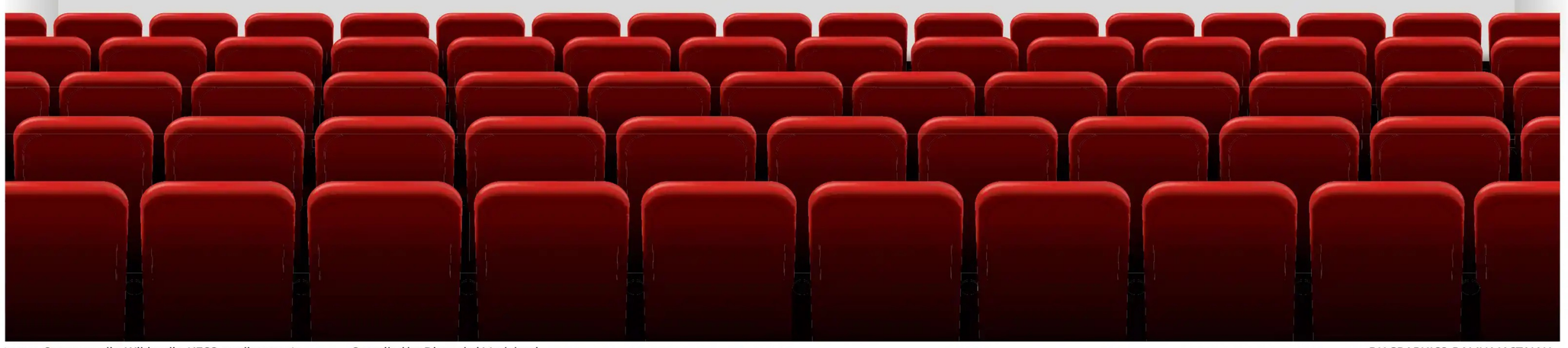
Pan-India scene

- Three Kannada films feature among India's Top 50 grossers in the past decade
- Only one Kannada movie has done well in the overseas market in about a decade
- Although collections in 2025 were significant, Kannada cinema still struggles for space on OTT

Ticket prices in state rose nearly 70% over seven years, against 52% nationwide

Year	Average ticket price	
	Kannada	All India
2019	₹72	₹106
2020-21	₹101	₹119
2022	₹101	₹119
2023	₹103	₹130
2024	₹116	₹134
2025	₹123*	₹161

*Approximate ticket price



Source: Ormax media, Wikipedia, KFCC, media reports Compiled by Divyashri Mudakavi DH GRAPHICS: RAMU MASTAIAH

The Rajkumar phenomenon and the rise of parallel cinema

S R RAMAKRISHNA
BENGALURU, DHNS

In the 1970s, Kannada cinema drew national attention with a string of 'experimental' films. They were made on lean budgets with talented theatre actors, some of whom eventually entered cinema. Also called 'art' films, they veered away from the mainstream style, avoiding stars, populist dialogues, and sometimes shunning songs. A remarkable feature of that era was that the best of Kannada writers of the time were engaging with cinema. S L Bhyrappa, U R Ananthamurthy, Girish Karnad, Chandrashekar Kambar, P Lankesh and Poornachandra Tejaswi were among those whose literary works were recreated on celluloid. Karnad, Kambar and Lankesh also directed and acted in films.

The first ever Kannada film, *Sati Savitri*, was released in 1934. In its nine decades of existence, Kannada cinema has witnessed its fair share of ups and downs. Initially, because film production in all southern languages was concentrated in Chennai (then Madras), Kannada cinema had to jostle with the more affluent Tamil and Telugu industries for studio and theatre space. A hurdle to making original films in Kannada was dubbing — films produced in other languages were voice-dubbed into Kannada and released across the Kannada-speaking regions. The costs were low, but Kannada talent got no opportunities.

In the early 1960s, language activists, led by writers Aa Na Kru and Ma Ramamurthy and supported by film stalwarts such as Rajkumar, campaigned against dubbing, and an informal ban came into effect. No film was dubbed into Kannada for nearly six decades.

Eventually, the ban was challenged, and the Competition Commission of India ruled against it. Since 2015, the resistance to dubbed films has subsided, but audiences continue to favour original films made in Kannada. If anything, dubbing into Kannada has helped OTT streams expand their footprint without investing in original Kannada content.

The informal ban on dubbing, however, delivered what it set out to. More films with original scripts began to be produced, offering opportunities for Kannada actors, directors and technicians. Rajkumar emerged as the biggest box-office draw, and dominated the screen well into the turn of the millennium. He was the only actor of his generation who could sing—he knew classical music intimately—and he gave Kannada cinema a solid standing with a long, consistent line of hits.

Defence spending, from Page 1

Tying economic stability to rearmament can be dangerous

Under these conditions, income gains are absorbed by debt service rather than translated into new spending.

Research by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and several central banks confirm that in high-debt economies, fiscal multipliers on household transfers fall well below pre-crisis norms. Corporate balance sheets reveal similar constraints. China's manufacturing sector remains burdened by overcapacity. In Europe and Japan, returns on capital have been chronically low for years. Public debt ratios sit near post-war highs, while higher interest rates have raised servicing costs. Inflation has narrowed the scope for monetary easing, and fiscal expansion now encounters sharper political and financial resistance. Stimulus increasingly stabilises balance sheets without restarting growth.

Defence spending operates under a different macroeconomic logic. It bypasses precisely the channels through which civilian stimulus has lost effectiveness.

Military demand does not depend on household confidence or discretionary consumption. It does not need private profitability, credit expansion or export growth. The state acts as buyer, financier and guarantor. Procurement decisions are embedded in multi-year planning cycles and insulated from short-term economic fluctuations, allowing spending to proceed even when private demand stalls. Defence programmes generate sustained activity across manufacturing, technology, logistics and services. They support skill employment and capital-intensive supply chains, providing contractors with predictable cash flows backed by the sovereign balance sheet. While the precise fiscal multiplier remains debated, the structural advantage is clear: defence procurement injects execution-ready demand without passing through over-leveraged private balance sheets.

The scale and durability of current rearmament suggest something structural rather than episodic. Defence budgets are being embedded in medium- and long-term fiscal frameworks, even as other categories of public spending remain constrained. Germany illustrates this shift. Despite weak growth and binding fiscal rules, Berlin has committed to a €100 billion defence fund and sustained increases in military outlays. Japan, facing modest growth and no immediate war, has abandoned its long-standing 1% of GDP ceiling and is moving towards 2%. Poland already spends over 4% of GDP on defence. For China, defence modernisation may be driven by strategic rivalry and regional security concerns. Yet it also coincides with slowing growth, property sector stress and industrial overcapacity.

If rearmament were purely threat-driven, spending patterns would diverge sharply by geography and strategic exposure. Instead, they are converging. Defence outlays are rising most rapidly where civilian growth is weakest and where conventional stimulus has delivered diminishing returns. This convergence suggests that defence has assumed a new macroeconomic role—as an anchor of growth and employment. Once integrated into stabilisation frameworks, it becomes costly to unwind. Jobs, industrial capacity and regional economies grow dependent on continuous procurement. Political incentives tilt towards maintaining production lines.

The escalation bias

That reliance carries risks that are often underestimated. Large-scale defence production generates inventories that must be stored, maintained, upgraded or replaced. Production lines cannot be shut down without economic disruption. Skilled labour cannot be dismissed and rehired without loss. Over time, the system develops a structural bias toward continuation. The logic gradually shifts: deployment justifies replenishment; replenishment sustains production and production sustains employment. None of this requires a desire for war. It only requires that conflict remains politically usable as justification.

History offers a stark warning. By 1939, after nearly a decade of public works, welfare programmes and monetary easing, US unemployment remained around 17%. Wartime mobilisation transformed the picture. By 1944, unemployment had fallen to 1.2% and output had nearly doubled. Rearmament solved the demand problem, but it did so by binding economic stabilisation to geopolitical confrontation.

The lesson is not inevitability but incentive structure: when growth depends on armament, risk becomes endogenous to the model itself. Alternative counter-cyclical tools face structural constraints. A renewed real estate push requires credit absorption by households servicing large mortgages. Consumption stimulus — tax rebates, transfers or subsidies — is directed towards deleveraging rather than fresh spending. Infrastructure and green transition programmes are viable in principle, but they operate on long timelines, demand complex coordination and depend on sustained political consensus that has grown fragile. They also rely on private demand to validate investment, demand that may not materialise in debt-saturated economies. Defence procurement faces none of these obstacles. The state purchases directly without passing through over-leveraged private balance sheets.

Exception or beneficiary?

India offers an instructive contrast. A decade of balance-sheet repair has left private-sector debt ratios lower by global standards. Consumption is rising. Corporate investment is returning without heavy fiscal compulsion. India remains one of the few economies where growth is driven by underlying demand rather than stimulus exhaustion. Yet India cannot remain insulated from a rapidly militarising world. Regional military modernisation and intensifying Indo-Pacific competition leave New Delhi with limited strategic choice. The distinction, however, is critical. India is adding defence-industrial capacity on top of a growing civilian economy. That positions it as a potential structural beneficiary of the current cycle rather than a participant trapped within it. The danger is that economic stability is increasingly tied to rearmament. When growth depends on armament, restraint becomes economically costly. And when restraint becomes costly, escalation becomes easier. That is the paradox shaping the global economy.

(Vidhu Shekhar is an Associate Professor of Finance and Accounting at the S P Jain Institute of Management & Research, Mumbai)

Nations will send warships to Hormuz, claims Trump

FIERCE FIGHT: US bombs Kharg; Iran threatens hits

WASHINGTON, AFP

US President Donald Trump on Saturday urged other nations to send ships to help secure the Strait of Hormuz, the critical chokepoint for global oil supplies disrupted by the West Asia war.

Trump, who has said the United States will soon start escorting tankers through the strait, posted on Truth Social that "Many countries, especially those who are affected by Iran's attempted closure of the Hormuz Strait, will be sending War Ships, in conjunction with the United States of America, to keep the Strait open and safe."

The US president added: "Hopefully China, France, Japan, South Korea, the UK, and others, that are affected by this artificial constraint, will send Ships to the area."

Iranian strikes have all but halted maritime traffic in the strait, through which a fifth of global crude oil and liquefied natural gas normally pass. It is just 54 km wide at its narrowest point.

With oil prices spiking, Trump was asked Friday when the United States Navy would begin escorting tankers through the Strait of Hormuz. "It'll happen soon, very soon," he said.

In his post on Saturday, Trump asserted that Iran's military capability had been eliminated but he conceded that it was still able to attack the strait.

"We have already destroyed 100% of Iran's Military capability, but it's easy for them to send a drone or two, drop a mine, or deliver a close range missile somewhere along, or in, this Waterway, no matter how badly defeated they are," he wrote.

▸ Iran, Page 7

Hamas urges Iran not to attack neighbours, Page 9

Smoke rises from an energy installation in Fujairah, UAE following a strike by Iran on Friday. AFP

WAR ZONE

- UAE says consulate in Iraqi Kurdistan targeted
- Drone strikes US embassy in Baghdad
- US attacks on military infrastructure on Iran's Kharg Island
- Israel threatens to strike ambulances in Lebanon
- Qatar evacuating a number of key areas as Iran presses retaliatory campaign
- Lebanon says Israeli strike in south kills 12 medics
- Fifteen killed in strike on factory in Iran's Isfahan

2 more Indian ships cross strait

Two Indian ships carrying LPG crossed the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday even as the Centre is engaging with governments in the region for ensuring the safe passage of the remaining 22 ships.
Details on Page 8

'US begging world to buy Russian oil'

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the US, despite "bullying India" to end Russian oil imports, is now begging them to buy Moscow's oil.

Akasa to levy fuel surcharge

Akasa Air will levy fuel surcharges ranging from Rs 199 to Rs 1,300 from March 15 due to the spike in jet fuel prices amid the West Asia conflict.

Commercial LPG hits Rs 5,000 in black market; hotels contemplate price hike

ASHWIN B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

The ripple effects of the West Asia conflict are sending the price of a 19 kg commercial LPG cylinder soaring to a staggering Rs 5,000 in the black market. While the official rate is around Rs 1,700, the sudden supply crunch has forced city hoteliers to either hike food prices or shut their doors due to what they say is black market exploitation.

WAR SHOCKS

The hotel industry has expressed deep resentment toward the state government and regulatory authorities for failing to curb the black-marketing of the essential fuel.

Hoteliers allege that while the shortage is real, local distributors are looting them by creating an artificial scarcity. "If we don't pay Rs 5,000, they simply don't deliver. We are caught between a rock and a hard place, either we lose our daily labourers by closing down, or we pass on the cost to the customer," a hotel owner said.

"If a Rs 1,700 cylinder is being sold for Rs 5,000 in broad daylight, where are the food and civil supplies officials? This is open loot," a member of a local hotel owners' association asked.

Hotel associations are now calling for urgent government intervention to crack down on hoarders and stabilise the prices of essential commodities before the common man's breakfast becomes a luxury.

Trump rejects efforts to launch ceasefire talks P.9

Cops take suo motu case after class 1 student made to stand in sun for delay

BENGALURU, DHNS: A class 1 student was allegedly made to stand in the sun for nearly two hours as punishment for arriving two minutes late at a private school in Yelahanka New Town.

When the child's parents along with activists from a pro-Kannada outfit questioned the school authorities about the punishment, the principal allegedly behaved arrogantly with them. The incident came to light after a social media post highlighted the matter. Taking a serious note of the incident, Yelahanka New Town police have registered a Non-Cognisable Report (NCR) and begun an inquiry.

Police said the act of subjecting a child to physical or mental suffering is punishable under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

A senior police officer said a suo motu case has been registered against the principal and the management after a social media post about the incident went viral.

▸ Student, Page 7

Boy killed, father hurt in Manipur blast

IMPHAL, PTI: A four-year-old boy was killed and his father injured in a bomb blast in Manipur's Noney district on Saturday, police said.

The incident happened in Taolingpung village in Khoupum when the toddler and his father were clearing bushes outside their house, they said.

The bomb, which was hidden in the bushes, went off when they struck it accidentally, police said.

State SDGs facing funding gap of Rs 79,000 crore: Panel

Estimated average annual gap is Rs 19,883 crore

BENGALURU, DHNS

FUND FIX

- Report says of the 17 SDGs, the state has to focus on five of them due to low performance
- According to the government's vision document prepared by in 2020, the state will need Rs 9.87 lakh crore by 2030 to meet the SDG targets
- The commission also sounds caution over the five flagship 'guarantee' schemes
- Asks the government to reduce the burden of salaries and pensions

Karnataka is facing a budgetary gap of Rs 79,532 crore to meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) even as its performance on key targets like malnutrition, quality education and gender equality is low, the Fifth State Finance Commission has said.

The commission's report for the 2026-30 period was tabled in the Assembly earlier this week.

"The estimated average annual gap is Rs 19,883 crore and for the next four years, it will be Rs 79,532 crore," the report said.

The report said that of the 17 SDGs, the state has to focus on five of them due to low performance: Zero Hunger - Malnutrition, Quality Education - Infrastructure and Learning Outcomes, Gender Equality,

Industry/Innovation & Infrastructure and Climate Action.

According to a 400-page vision document prepared by the government in 2020, the state will need Rs 9.87 lakh crore by 2030 to meet the SDG targets.

Guarantees

The commission also sounded caution over the five flagship 'guarantee' schemes. The state government is spending Rs 51,286 crore on these schemes in 2026-27.

"Though continuation of the guarantee schemes is necessary to provide basic universal income to all the needy people as well as to empower women and marginalised sections of the society, it is imperative to mobilise additional resources through innovative means and also by increasing own source revenue (OSR) and efficiency in tax collection and other alternative measures," the report underscored.

The commission further asked the government to reduce the burden of salaries and pensions. "Rationalisation of expenditure on salaries is possible through effective human resource policies, work flexibility, increased application of technology, effective hiring practices and enhancement of productivity and efficiency among staff," it said.

11 Indians play robbery 'victims' in US to get visas

AHMEDABAD, DHNS: The United States Department of Justice has charged 11 Indian nationals for allegedly participating in "staged armed robberies" to seek immigration benefits as victims of violent crimes.

Over the past several years, numerous similar cases have highlighted such "crimes" as a common modus operandi used by individuals seeking US visas.

While the specific states of their origin are not yet disclosed, the fact that all individuals share the Patel surname suggests their possible link to Gujarat.

Details on Page 8

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Eligible candidates who wish to attend the interview must submit a scanned copy of the application form (Annexure - I) along with supporting documents to the e-mail address: **shgmedicalcollege@gmail.com** latest by **05:00 pm on 21st March 2026**, with the subject line of e-mail **"Application for the Position of Professor and Associate Professor at Shillong Medical College, Shillong"**.

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2. Physiology	1	1
3. Pharmacology	1	Nil
4. Pathology	1	Nil
5. Microbiology	1	1
6. Forensic Medicine	1	Nil
7. Obstetrics & Gynaecology	1	1
8. Anaesthesia	1	Nil
9. Orthopaedics		1

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Dated: 12-03-2026

Modi targets Didi over SIR; BJP & TMC workers clash

KOLKATA, DHNS

Ahead of the impending announcement of the Assembly poll schedule in West Bengal, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday set the BJP's campaign tone by accusing the ruling Trinamool Congress of opposing the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls to protect its vote bank of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

Some BJP supporters, who were going to Modi's rally, clashed with TMC workers at Girish Park in Kolkata. Shashi Panja, a state minister, alleged that BJP supporters hurled bricks at her residence.

PM Narendra Modi addresses a rally in Kolkata on Saturday. PTI

> The TMC is opposed to the SIR as they want to save the infiltrators from being struck off from the electoral rolls. They are even opposing the removal of deceased people from the electoral rolls.
> **Narendra Modi, PM**

Alleging that Mamata Banerjee's government also shielded criminals, including rapists and extortionists, Modi said the days of TMC's "hooliganism" were over, and that the writing on the wall clearly said that the BJP would come to power after the polls.

"When the BJP will come to power in West Bengal, it will ensure not only Sabka Saath and Sabka Vikas (solidarity with all and development of all), but also Sabka Hisab (accountability of all)," Modi said at a rally in Brigade Parade Ground here.

The saffron party's state leaders claimed it was a historic rally with nearly 8-10 lakh people in attendance.

TMC leader and minister Bratya Basu alleged that Modi's repeated references to "infiltrators" and "Bangladeshis" were unsubstantiated claims. "He failed to explain how many among the names missing from the electoral rolls were Rohingyas or Bangladeshis," Basu said, accusing the BJP of trying to polarise voters.

Modi said the TMC is opposed to SIR as it wants to save infiltrators from being struck off the electoral rolls.

▸ Modi, Page 7

STAMPEDE IMPACT

New IPL season reopens old wounds for victims' families

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

The new IPL season may have excited the RCB fans in the city but for families who lost their loved ones in the stampede during the team's victory celebration last season, it has only re-kindled painful memories.

For Lakshman H, who lost his only son Bhumik (21) in the June 4 tragedy, life has changed entirely. "I don't think we can express how painful it is and how we are spending each day. Our entire life has changed. Now, we are not living anymore, we are just pushing each day. There is no hope in our lives," he lamented.

On the fateful day last year, following RCB's maiden IPL championship win, a huge crowd gathered near the Chinnaswamy Stadium to celebrate the victory. Owing to poor crowd management and a lack of adequate security measures, the situation turned chaotic, resulting in 11 deaths.

> My daughter loved the cricketers and I took her hoping she could get a glimpse of them. But what happened just turned our lives upside down. I live with that pain every day and will have to live with it all my life.
> **Ashwini**

Relatives of victims said the day's memory haunts them even today and the wounds are still afresh. "My daughter loved the cricketers and I took her hoping she could get a glimpse of them. But what happened just turned our lives upside down. I live with that pain every day and will have to live with it all my life," said Ashwini who lost her daughter Divyanshi (14).

▸ IPL, Page 7

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GARBAGE GRID BSWML plans 30 large garbage transfer stations; experts flag one-size model

How B'luru aims to reorganise its waste transfer system

NAVEEN MENEZES
BENGALURU, DHNS

Flushed with funds, the Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Ltd (BSWML) plans to establish 30 large garbage transfer stations across the city to replace the long-standing practice of loading waste on roadsides, a system that has often drawn complaints over hygiene and traffic disruption.

But the move to build high-capacity stations, instead of smaller decentralised facilities, is raising concerns among waste management experts who say the model could increase travel distances for auto tippers and affect door-to-door waste collection in some parts of the city.

So far, the waste management agency has operationalised three transfer stations in Koramangala, Chamarajpet and Sarvagna Nagar, while work is underway in constituencies such as Vijayanagar and Shivajinagar. These are meant to handle 150 tonnes of waste.

Now, the BSWML has proposed to set up 23 more and much larger stations in areas such as CV Raman Nagar, Hebbal, Yelahanka, Mahadevapura, RR Nagar and Jayanagar, among others, at a total cost of Rs 316.52 crore. The Government of India will provide Rs 68.42 crore under the Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0, while the state government will bear Rs 43.79 crore. The remaining Rs 204.31 crore will be funded by the five city corporations.

Under the new system, garbage-laden auto tippers unload waste into static containers at the facility. A hook loader then lifts the container and pushes the waste into a 15-tonne capsule mounted on a 10-wheeler truck. Once full, the truck transports the waste to processing facilities, waste-to-energy plants or landfill sites located 20 to 30 km away from the city.

Within a year, all of Bengaluru's Assembly constituencies — whose geography and population size vary widely — are expected to have a waste transfer station.

Question over mini or large stations

Before proposing the large facilities, the erstwhile Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) had established 25 mini transfer stations across the city in 2019. Each facility could handle about 25 tonnes of waste and was designed to serve a single ward. They required less space and had lower operational costs.

In this system, auto tippers directly unloaded waste into specially designed compactors that did not require equipment such as hook loaders or static containers. However, each compactor could carry only up to ten tonnes of waste, compared with the 15-tonne capsules used in the new system.

The project, however, faced challenges during implementation, including resistance from local residents, oversupply of waste that caused spillage, and difficulty in identifying alternate land. In places such as Jeevan Bima Nagar, garbage was often transferred outside the facility instead of inside, reducing its effectiveness.

The new transfer stations are ten times bigger in size, and each facility is designed to handle 250 to 260 tonnes of garbage.

However, a 260-tonne facility requires waste from at least six to eight wards to run at optimum capacity. Waste generated in each ward ranges from about 20 to 30 tonnes a day to as much as 60 to 70 tonnes, depending on population density. This also shows that the standard size of the transfer station is designed without taking into account the size of a constituency and the volume of waste it generates.

The reason is that some wards in Bengaluru are compact, while others are geographically large.

Constituencies such as Mahadevapura, RR Nagar, Yeshwantpur, Bengaluru South and KR Puram stretch several kilometres, potentially increasing travel time for waste-laden auto tippers.

A solid waste management expert said the BSWML should have designed a mix of transfer stations with varying capacities, given the differences in the size and design of Assembly constituencies and even wards. "A one-size-fits-all approach does not work in Bengaluru," the expert said.

She added that longer travel distances could discourage auto tippers from making additional collection trips.

"Each auto tipper carries about 600 kg of waste. With an average household generating around 1.4 kg daily, an auto tipper is expected to make two trips to cover about 750 houses. Transfer stations therefore must be located strategically so that auto tippers can unload waste within a reasonable radius. If the facility is far away, household waste collection may be disrupted."

M Maheshwar Rao, Managing Director, BSWML, said the model was based on the waste volumes handled by the existing transfer stations in Chamarajpet and Koramangala.

"We have proposed one transfer station per constituency, but large constituencies may need more than one," he said.

"During operations, wards will be mapped based on the distance to the transfer station. We can split wards within a constituency depending on the station's location and the quantity of waste generated," he added.

Some experts said that in large constituencies such as Mahadevapura, KR Puram, RR Nagar, Yeshwantpur and Bengaluru South, three or more medium-capacity transfer stations of around 100 tonnes would have been more practical than a single large facility.

This transfer station in Chamarajpet is one of the three currently in operation. DH FILE PHOTO

Corporations	Total No. of transfer stations.	In Operation	Land finalised	Land identified, not handed over	Land yet to be identified
Central	8	1	2	2	3
South	5	1	1	2	1
North	5	1	2	2	0
East	2		1	1	0
West	7		0	4	3
Bengaluru Urban*	3		0	0	3
Total	**30**	**3**	**6**	**11**	**10**

*BEYOND GBA LIMITS

More biogas plants planned in city, says GBA chief

GBA Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao visits the waste-to-energy (Kasa-Rasa) facility in Koramangala, Bengaluru, on Saturday. PHOTO: GBA

Existing facilities to be upgraded under decentralised model

BENGALURU, DHNS

With the LPG crisis deepening, alternate methods such as the use of biogas have gained prominence. The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao, on Saturday, said that the civic body will set up more biogas plants in the city.

Speaking to reporters after visiting the waste-to-energy facility at Koramangala, Rao said that a comprehensive study will be undertaken to produce biogas from wet waste in the city and to establish biogas plants in GBA city corporations.

"To establish decentralised centres in city corporations, around 2–3 acres of land will be required in each corporation. In the short term, existing facilities will be upgraded to produce biogas and steps will be taken to supply the gas to nearby hotels," he said.

However, he noted that proper segregation of wet and dry waste at the local level will help the process and citizens' cooperation will play a crucial role.

At present, biogas is being produced from 10 tonnes of waste at the facility in Koramangala and the energy is being supplied to a nearby hotel. "Steps will be taken to increase this capacity. If the high-tension power line located at the site is relocated, large-scale biogas production will be possible, and officials have been instructed to take appropriate action in this regard," Rao said.

Of the 12 biogas plants earlier constructed by the BBMP, only six plants are currently operational.

"Each plant processes about 5 tonnes of wet waste per day, producing biogas from approximately 30 tonnes of waste in total. Renovation works are underway to make the remaining six plants operational. At biogas plants, about 30 to 50 kg of biogas can be produced from one tonne of wet waste. Accordingly, around 200 kg of gas is produced daily in each plant. The generated biogas is used for internal consumption within the plants, and surplus gas is used to generate electricity through generators to light nearby parks," a statement by the GBA said.

The biogas plant at Koramangala, with a capacity of 8.5 tonnes, supplies around 120 kg of biogas daily to a nearby hotel.

Steps have also been taken to construct four new decentralised biomethanisation plants. Two of these plants have been completed and will become operational soon, Rao said.

Woman killed by lover over marriage row

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 24-year-old woman was allegedly strangled to death by her lover using an electric wire following a dispute over marriage in Varthur.

The deceased has been identified as Ranjitha H G, who was studying in the final year of BA in Mysuru. The accused, Ayyappa, worked as a supervisor at a dry fruits shop in Varthur, and both hailed from Ponnampet in Kodagu district. A senior police officer said that Ayyappa was already married but had separated from his wife. He later developed a relationship with Ranjitha and brought her to Bengaluru after promising to marry her in December 2025. They were living together in a rented house in Ramdas Layout and had frequent quarrels over marriage.

During an argument on Thursday night, Ayyappa allegedly strangled Ranjitha using an electric wire and tried to portray the incident as a suicide by hanging. He called her family to inform them about the incident before taking her to a hospital, where doctors declared her dead.

Following a complaint filed by the victim's mother, Rani H G, Varthur police arrested Ayyappa. During interrogation, he confessed that Ranjitha was forcing him to marry her, and he decided to kill her.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Gomatha Respect Campaign: A one-day state-level workshop; Hindu Sadara Kshemabhivruddhi Sangha; West of Chord Road, Mahalakshmipura; 8 am

Women's Day Celebration and Puja: Mass Satyanarayana Puja and International Women's Day event; Dinesh Gundu Rao, K Harish Kumar, Soumya Reddy, and Mamatha Poojary to be present; Devaki Ananda Suvarna Convention Hall, Billava Bhavana, Bannerghatta Road; 11 am

Book Launch and Audio Release: Release of P Lankesh's 'Teeke-Tippani' (3 volumes) and audiobooks of his short stories; CM Siddaramaiah, Prakash Raj, and T N Seetharam to be present; Kondajji Basappa Auditorium, Palace Road; 11 am

International Women's Day: Special event by AWAKE; Vanishree Vishwanath, Hemalatha Chidanand, and C Bhuvaneshwari to be present; Shivakumaraswamy Auditorium, Nisarga Grounds, 4th Phase Yelahanka; 4.30 pm

Book Launch: 'My Name is Gauhar Jaan': Launch of the book by Vikram Sampath; Mysore Manjunath and Rohini Srivathsa to be present; Viveka Auditorium, Yuva Patha, 4th T Block, Jayanagar; 5.30 pm

CULTURAL

Literature Seminar and Poets' Meet: 'Bandaya Sahitya New Generation' campaign featuring sessions on 'People's Movements and Literature'; Baraguru Ramachandrappa, Vikram Visaji, and Rajappa Dalavayi to be present; Gandhi Bhavan, Kumara Krupa Road; 10.30 am

Gouri Sundar Annual Award Ceremony: Presentation of awards to Mruthyunjaya Doddawada; B R Lakshman Rao, Na Damodar Shetty, and Y K Muddukrishna to be present; The Indian Institute of World Culture, B P Wadia Road, Basavanagudi; 10.30 am

Svara Mayura Music & Dance Festival: Concerts by Sampagodu S Vighnaraja and others, followed by 'Shiva Tandava' dance drama by Sanjay Shantaram and Shivapriya troupe; Nadamrutha Kaladeepa, Uttarahalli; 2.30 pm

Cybercriminals now weaponise psychology with AI, says DGP

ASHWIN B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

Addressing a gathering of cybercrime first responders on Saturday, Pronab Mohanty, Director General of Police (Cyber Command Centre), warned that cybercriminals are increasingly weaponising psychology alongside advanced technology like Generative AI to target the middle class and affluent professionals.

Speaking at the 'CCIO Impact Advocacy Meet-Up 2026' held at the Bangalore International Centre, Mohanty noted that even experts in their respective fields are falling prey to "digital arrests" and sophisticated financial frauds. "Cybercrime is no longer just a technical breach; it is an assault on human psychology," he said.

The DGP highlighted the shifting landscape of digital threats, particularly the rise of deepfakes and automated scams. He shared an anecdote about a New York Times "Identify the AI" challenge, noting that as AI software improves, even seasoned professionals find it increasingly difficult to distinguish between real and synthetic images.

"Today, you may detect a deepfake, but two months later the AI will have bypassed your detection. It is a constant game of cat and mouse," Mohanty added, stressing that the state is focusing on a preventive-centric approach to dismantle the broader criminal ecosystem rather than just individual attackers.

The event, organised by the Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ISAC) and CopConnect with support from Zscaler, recognised the efforts of Cyber Crime Intervention Officers (CCIOs). These volunteers act as a bridge between victims and law enforcement agencies.

"Cybersecurity is an umbrella that must cover the entire government and civil society. It is not strictly an enforcement issue," Mohanty remarked, acknowledging the role of the 23,000 self-defenders trained by ISAC across the country.

Mohanty urged citizens to be cautious of unsolicited links and to maintain a healthy scepticism about online interactions. He pointed out that 99% of frauds can be avoided through preliminary safety measures and early reporting via the 1930 helpline.

The meet-up concluded with a roadmap to strengthen India's cyber resilience through the expansion of the CCIO network, emphasising the role of academic institutions and civil society in building a safer digital ecosystem.

Pronab Mohanty, Director General of Police (Cyber Command Centre), speaks at the 'CCIO Impact Advocacy Meet-Up 2026' in Bengaluru on Saturday.
DH PHOTO/ASHWIN B M

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Venues In Bangalore

Infantry Road:	Safina Plaza, No.84/85 - 560 001
Jayanagar:	Hema Chandra Kalyan Mahal, 2nd Block, (Near Ashoka Pillar) - 11
Banshankari:	Sri Hari Kalyana Mantap, 30th Main, B.S.K. 3rd Stage, Near K.I.M.S. Hospital - 560085
Rajarajeshwari Nagar:	Vasavi Mahal Kalyana Mantapa, Next To Reliance Digital, Ideal Homes I Phase - 560098
Vijaya Nagar:	Five O Gallery, 17th Cross, M.C. Road, Near Vijay Nagar Bus Stop - 560040
Rajajinagar:	Raja Rajeshwari Kalyana Mantapa, 2nd Block, Next To Blue Hyunday Showroom, Dr. Rajkumar Road - 560010
Malleswaram:	Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Mutt, No.198, 11th Cross, Sampige Road - 560003
Koramangala:	Apoorva International, #35A, Raheja Arcade, Opp Star Box - 560095
Basavanagudi:	Amolak Apparels, 7/3, 1st Floor, Opp. Karnataka Bank - 560004

Org. by: Surya Agency Pvt. Ltd.

BLDE Association
Smt. Bangaramma Sajjan Campus,
B.M. Patil Road, Vijayapura - 586 103, Karnataka.
Ph: 08352-262770, E-mail: contact@bldea.org

PROPOSAL FOR SUPPLY OF UNIFORMS

Competitive proposals are invited in sealed cover for the Supply of stitched uniforms, T-Shirts, Track Pants for schools and uniform materials, Kothari Saree with Blouse (Aprox. 100 Nos) for colleges with services at the above specified address on or before **25th March 2026 by 05:30pm.**

Fabric: Mafatlal, Sangam and Valji. Approximate student strength:10500.

Eligibility Criteria:1) Firm/Entity should have PAN and GST registration, **2)**Minimum 5years of experience in the said business and **3)**Atleast two references of reputed educational institutions. **Sd/- General Secretary**

GOVERNMENT OF JHARKHAND
Office of the Executive Engineer
Irrigation Division, Jasidih Camp-Deoghar

E-Procurement Tender Notice
Tender Reference No. :- WRD/Irr. Div., Jasidih camp-Deoghar/SBD-IFB-02/2025-26 Dt :14.03.2026

1.	Name of the work	Earthwork of Nawadih Distributary from ch. 120.00 to 196.00 and all structures including HR from ch 0.00 to 196.00
2.	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Rs. 10,46,26,320.55 (Rs. Ten Crore Forty Six lakh Twenty Six Thousand Three hundred Twenty and Fifty five paisa) only/-
3.	Time of Completion	540 (Five Hundred Forty) Days
4.	Last date & Time for receipt of bids	07.04.2026 Up to 5:00 P.M.
5.	Date of Publication of Tender on website	17.03.2026 01:00 P.M.
6.	Name & address of office Inviting tender	Executive Engineer Irrigation Division, Jasidih Camp-Deoghar
7.	Contact no. of Procurement officer	097710-63448
8.	Helpline number of e-Procurement cell	06432-232477

Note :- Only E-Tender will be accepted
Further details can be seen on website http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in

Executive Engineer
Irrigation Division, Jasidih Camp-Deoghar

PR 375093 (Water Resource)25-26*D

Rail Wheel Plant/Bela
(Distt. - Saran), Bihar - 841221

E-Open Tender Notice No:-S/RWP/E/2025-26/22 dated: 12.03.2026. Principal Chief Materials Manager/Rail Wheel Plant, Bela for and on behalf of the **President of India** invites **online "e-Open Tender"**, through Indian Railways E-Procurement Website **www.ireps.gov.in**, for supply of following Stores item at RWP/Bela. The closing time of all tenders is 14:00 hrs. **(1) Tender No.:** 01251025, **Short Description of item:** Fused Silica Powder, **Quantity:** 90000 Kgs., **Date of Tender Closing/Opening:** 06.04.2026 at 14:00 Hrs. 1. Website address, on which full tender details can be seen and downloaded from, is **www.ireps.gov.in**. 2. The prospective firms/bidders submitting bid are advised to remain in touch with the above website for updates including **Addendum/Corrigendum/ Cancellation** with respect to the above tender.

PCMM/RWP/Bela
RWP/CPRO/ADVT/2025-26/121

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice No.: Prov_CGBD_5Line_2Line_sin, Dated: 09.03.2026

The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders for the following works:

Item of work	Approx. Value
South Western Railway - Bengaluru (SBC) Division: Provision of CGDB at Carmelaram, Yelahanka and 5 Line, 2 Line & Single Line, Double Face Display Board arrangements at Bengaluru Cantonment, Yelahanka, Karajagi, Krishnarajapuram, KSR Bengaluru, Bangarapet, Mandya, Tumakuru, Kuppam, Hindupur, Channapatna, Hosur, Malur, Ramanagaram, Sri Sathya Sai Prasanthi Nilayam & Whitefield and Doddaballapur, Dharmapuri Station over Bengaluru Division.	Rs. 9,93,54,857.34

Last date for submission of bids: **Upto 11:00 Hrs. on 31.03.2026**

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in

Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecommunication Engineer/Bengaluru

PUB/988/AAMO/PRB/SWR/2025-26

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South Western Railway - SWR | SWRRLY | SWRAILWAYHQ | sw_railways

राष्ट्रीय नाट्य विद्यालय
NATIONAL SCHOOL OF DRAMA
(An Autonomous Institution of the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India)
Ministry of Culture
Government of India

NATIONAL SCHOOL OF DRAMA
(An Autonomous Institution of the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India)
Bahawalpur House, Bhagwandas Road, New Delhi-110001

ADMISSION NOTICE - 2026
JOINT ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

National School of Drama, invites applications for admission to the following courses:

- Three Year Diploma Course in Dramatics 2026-2029, New Delhi
- One Year Certificate Course (2026-2027) in
  - Dramatic Art at Gangtok, Sikkim
  - Theatre in Education at Agartala, Tripura
  - Acting at Bengaluru, Karnataka
  - Indian Classical Theatre at Varanasi, U.P.

For complete information about admission process, application forms and prospectus, please visit the NSD website.

http.//www.nsd.gov.in
or
http://www.onlineadmission.nsd.gov.in

Director
National School of Drama, New Delhi

CBC 09130/12/0018/2526

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY

MATERIAL MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
('e' Tender Notice for the supply of Stores, No.EPS/127/2025)

PCMM/WCR on behalf of the President of India invites the following advertised tenders through E-procurement System. No manual/postal offers shall be entertained. Tenders can be accessed under the link website https:/ireps.gov.in" for details and for submission of Tender.

Sr No.	Tender No.	Short Description	Tendered Qty.	Due Date
1	8125WCRTP-11	Manufacture and supply of Individual/ Isolated Pre-tensioned Pre-stressed Concrete (PSC) Sleepers	38194.95 Metre	02/04/2026
2	30251055	SILENT BLOCK FOR ANCHOR LINK	10710 Nos.	06/04/2026
3	34253073	Paint synthetic Enamel interior finishing white	52080 Litre.	09/04/2026
4	81256172	Manufacturing and Supply of Glued Insulated Rail Joints 6.5 meter long of G3(L) type for UIC 60/60E 1 Rails with all fittings	7376 Nos.	10/04/2026
5	38265007	TOP HOUSING	2000 Nos.	14/04/2026
6	82255987	Pembrolizumab 100 mg Injection (Keytruda 100)	63 Nos.	15/04/2026
7	80261164	SUPPLY OF LIQUIFIED OXYGEN GAS	200000 cum	16/04/2026

" For tenders with estimated value below Rs. 50 lakh, interested firms are advised to visit www.ireps.gov.in".

Sd./-
For Principal Chief Material Manager, West Central Railway, Jabalpur

स्वच्छ भारत अभियान एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

E-Auction for leasing of Parcel Space, Parking & Advertising and Miscellaneous Contracts by Bengaluru Division

The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites bidders for E-Auctions on the following Dates:

1. **Parking & Pay and Use:** 17.03.2026.
2. **Parcel:** 20.03.2026, 23.03.2026, 24.03.2026
3. **Miscellaneous:** 23.03.2026.

For details log on : www.ireps.gov.in
Keep visiting the website for any corrigendum till closing date

Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Bengaluru

PUB/996/AAMO/PRB/SWR/2024-25

Download the **RailOne** app. RailOne is the all-in-one railway app by Indian Railways. Passengers can book reserved tickets, unreserved tickets, platform tickets, and season passes, check PNR status, order food, and access many more services at their fingertips. Use digital payment to book unreserved tickets through **RailOne** app, and enjoy up to a **3%** discount.

South Western Railway - SWR | SWRRLY | SWRRLY

ADOPTIONS CAN HELP Activists wary of capacity; sterilisation, vaccination intensified

Work on stray dog shelters begins in right earnest

SHILPA P
MYSURU, DHNS

The government is taking steps to establish shelters to house a minimum of 500 stray dogs each in all ULBs (urban local bodies), especially the city corporations, as per the Supreme Court order.

The process to set up dog shelters has begun in Bengaluru, Mysuru, Hubballi, Davangere, Tumakuru, Belagavi, Vijayapura and Raichur corporations. They will be fully functional shortly.

Simultaneously, the stray dog adoption programme is also picking up. The sterilisation and rabies vaccination drives have also been intensified, urban development department secretary Deepa M Cholan told *DH*.

Cases of dog bites in the state increased from 40,177 in 2020 to 4,99,343 (52 rabies deaths) in 2025.

Commissioner for the department of animal husbandry and veterinary services Shilpa Nag said the department had initiated a project to attach RFID tags to all dogs, to track their movements.

The department is extending all necessary technical and medical support to ULBs in handling stray dogs and their shelters, apart from the department's programmes to manage them, she said.

According to the director of the department of animal husbandry and veterinary sciences Dr P Srinivasu, while the Animal Birth Control (ABC) centres were functional in most of the districts, many were managed by NGOs.

So far, stray dogs were released back in their respective territories, after sterilisation and rabies vaccination.

Henceforth, following the Apex Court order and as per the SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) given by the Animal Welfare Board of India, stray dogs picked up near institutions will be kept at the shelters. The rest will be released to their respective areas after vaccination and sterilisation.

Deputy director for animal husbandry, Greater Bengaluru Authority, T Chandraiah said there were already eight ABC centres in Bengaluru.

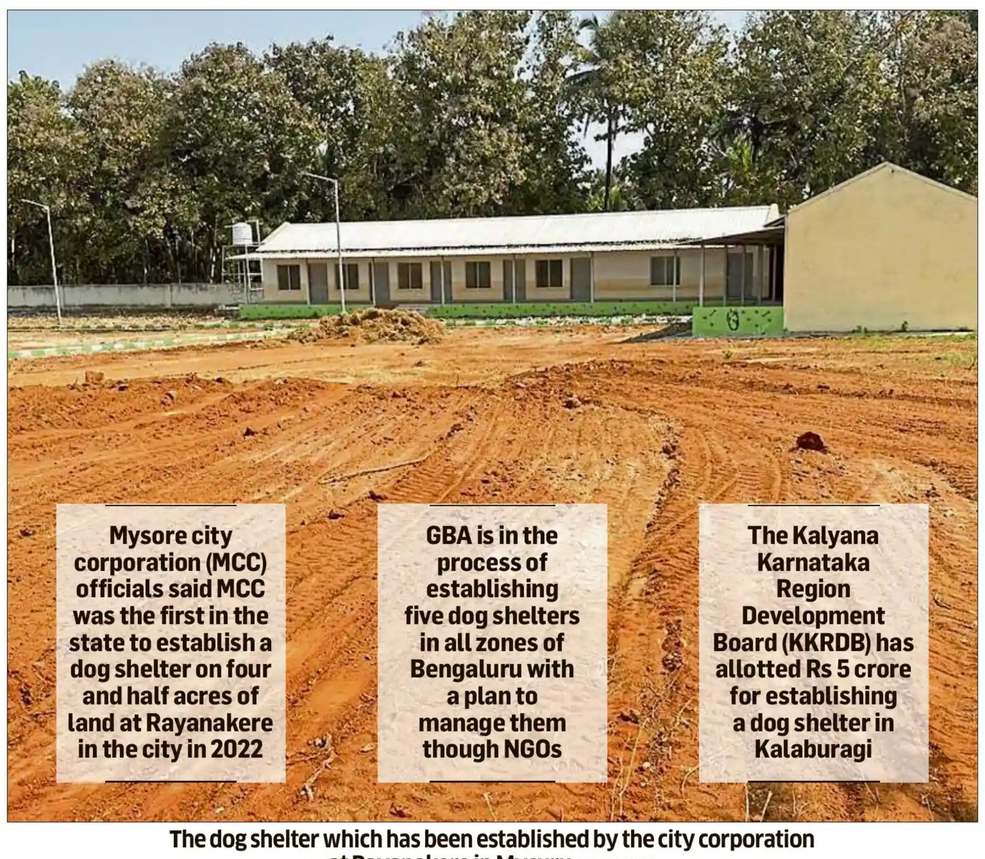
GBA is in the process of establishing five dog shelters in all zones of Bengaluru with a plan to manage them though NGOs.

Mysore city corporation (MCC) officials said MCC was the first in the state to establish a dog shelter on four and half acres of land at Rayanakere in the city in 2022.

But they could not operate it due to shortage of funds. Now, MCC is developing it at a cost of Rs 1.6 crore with all necessary infrastructure, including an operation theatre for sterilisation, individual kennels. The facility will be ready in 3 months.

Savitha Nagabhushan of the People For Animals said with the increase in human population, growing garbage load and the unscientific disposal of poultry and animal waste, the street dog population was on the rise.

She said keeping dogs in shelters permanently was not ideal as it can be stressful for them and may also increase the risk of infections and disease spread.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GBA is in the process of establishing five dog shelters in all zones of Bengaluru with a plan to manage them though NGOs
The Kalyana Karnataka Region Development Board (KKRDB) has allotted Rs 5 crore for establishing a dog shelter in Kalaburagi
The dog shelter which has been established by the city corporation at Rayanakere in Mysuru. DH PHOTO

But writer and environmentalist Ravi Bale felt that these shelters were a kinder and more viable option for street dogs than being left to fend for themselves on the streets. He suggested that dog lovers should adopt such dogs as the shelters would not be enough for the huge population of strays.

The Belagavi city corporation is establishing dog shelters at a cost of Rs 2.1 crore at Vantmuri on the outskirts of the city and at Hirebagewadi in the taluk.

Instances of attacks on humans have increased with an increase in the stray dog population in the past few years. While on record there were 2,500 stray dogs in the city, their actual population was over 20,000, sources said.

The Kalyana Karnataka Region Development Board (KKRDB) has allotted Rs 5 crore for establishing a dog shelter in Kalaburagi.

The project was announced a year ago and 1.5 acres of land was identified for the purpose at Udanur on the outskirts of Kalaburagi for the purpose.

But the work could not take off due to stiff opposition from people in the village.

Kalaburagi corporation officials said they had identified an alternative land at Kanadal village in Kalaburagi taluk and work would begin soon.

Officials said Kalaburagi city had more than 16,000 stray dogs and over a hundred dog bite cases had been reported in the past one year.

(With inputs from Raju Gavali in Belagavi and Vittal Shastri in Kalaburagi)

Government nod for industrial investments of Rs 4,824 crore

37 new projects across 13 districts to generate 14k jobs

BENGALURU, DHNS

Industries Minister M B Patil said on Saturday that industrial projects with a total investment of Rs 4,824.31 crore generating 14,525 jobs have been approved at the 158th meeting of the State Level Single Window Clearance.

The government cleared 37 new industries and two additional investment projects across 13 districts, including Vijayapura, Bagalkot, Chitradurga, Kolar and Bengaluru South, Patil said in a statement.

"The approved projects in sectors, such as IT infrastructure, sugar manufacturing, technical textiles, compressed biogas, aerospace, jewellery production, electronics, software, and five-star hotel construction, will generate 14,525 new employment opportunities in the state," Patil said.

Among the projects approved, 22 are large and medium industrial projects (with investments above Rs 50 crore), totalling Rs 3,908.68 crore and generating employment for 12,475 people; 15 are new projects with investments ranging from Rs 15 crore to Rs 50 crore, totalling Rs 350.60 crore and providing jobs for 1,750 people. Two additional investment projects amounting to Rs 565.03 crore, creating employment for 300 people.

Some of the major approved projects include Bagmane Constructions Pvt Ltd (IT infrastructure development worth Rs 494.65 crore); Karnataka Bangaru Sugars Pvt Ltd (sugar factory at Rs 443.50 crore); Kleine Pax Ltd (technical textile unit of Rs 376 crore); Trishul Buildtech & Infrastructure Pvt Ltd (five-star hotel project worth Rs 300 crore); Troult Grass Pvt Ltd (compressed biogas unit worth Rs 257.77 crore at Mudhol); Tsuyo Manufacturing Pvt Ltd (electric vehicle motor and controller manufacturing unit worth Rs 250 crore).

D K Suresh raises concern over sale of milk at Re 1 per litre

BENGALURU, DHNS: Bengaluru Cooperative Milk Union Ltd (BAMUL) president D K Suresh has raised serious concerns over online e-commerce platforms selling milk at Re 1 per litre.

Suresh alleged that the companies were doing this to attract consumers and improve their market share.

"The cooperative societies and milk unions have a system in place. The dairy farmers are paid and milk is procured. Now, if these companies try to disrupt the system for the sake of their market share, it is very difficult to get back the system in place," he said.

Suresh demanded that the state and central governments should immediately intervene and stop such sales.

He also shot off a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in this regard.

COMMON MAN'S COOLER

Colourful earthen pots are put up for sale near Unkal in Hubballi on Saturday. The demand for earthen pots goes up during summer as they serve as the common man's water cooler. DH PHOTO/GOVINDRAJ JAVALI

Bypolls: High command to decide candidates, says CM

BAGALKOT, DHNS: Affirming the Congress's preparedness to face the upcoming byelection to the Bagalkot and Davangere South Assembly seats, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said that the Congress high command would take a decision on the candidates to be fielded at the hustings.

"The elections could be announced within a week's time. Anybody can aspire for the party ticket," Siddaramaiah told journalists in Bagalkot.

Asked if the party was likely to field a member of H Y Meti's family, the CM added, "They are certainly in contention. But we can issue the ticket to only one member from any family."

Participating in the groundbreaking ceremony for the government medical college, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar pointed to the Congress's impressive showing in the byelections that had been held since the Assembly elections in 2023.

"The Congress emerged triumphant despite the sons of former CMs Basavaraj Bommai and H D Kumaraswamy being fielded against us in those bypolls. Bagalkot is our seat. We must ensure that our candidate polls more votes than Meti in the byelection," said Shivakumar.

UKP stage 3: CM promises Rs 5K cr extra grant for land compensation

BAGALKOT, DHNS

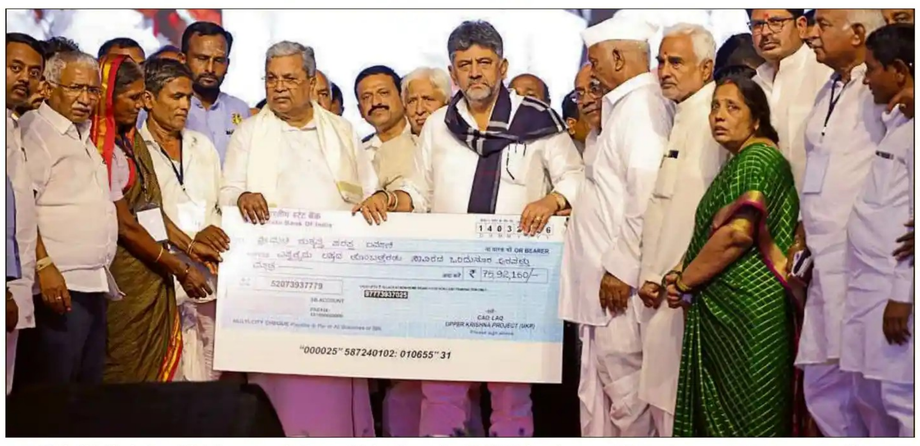
Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday announced that he would allocate an additional Rs 5,000 crore in the Supplementary Budget to distribute as compensation for the lands acquired for Upper Krishna Stage 3.

Speaking at an event to lay the foundation stone for the government medical college and disburse compensation cheques to farmers who parted with their land for UKP - 3, Siddaramaiah said, "Rs 3,000 crore was already allocated for providing compensation to the land losers in the 2026-27 budget. Based on the request, additional funds will be sanctioned in the Supplementary Budget."

Taking a dig at the Centre over the inordinate delay in implementing the project, Siddaramaiah said, "Thirteen years on, the Centre is yet to issue gazette notification. In Gujarat's case, the Centre issued notification despite a litigation in river water-sharing issue. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, despite legal challenges and rehab disputes, ensured that the project in their state was cleared. But they have not shown any interest in UKP - 3," Siddaramaiah alleged.

"I have written several times to the Centre seeking it to issue gazette notification for UKP - 3. I have even taken delegation to PM Modi. But the Centre did not respond to our pleas. There are no legal hurdles for the Mahadayi project, but the Centre is adopting go-slow tactics," he charged.

"The state government is committed to establish government medical colleges in all districts, super-specialty hospitals and trauma care centres. Government medical colleges will soon be established in Kolar and Mangaluru while Haveri will get a super-specialty hospital. The children from rural and poor backgrounds should also become doctors," he said.


Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy D K Shivakumar hand over a compensation cheque to a farmer who parted with his land for UKP-3, in Bagalkot on Saturday. Ministers H K Patil and R B Timmapur among others are seen. DH PHOTO

Internal quota: Special Cabinet meet on March 27

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a government event in Bagalkot, said on Saturday that he has called a special cabinet meeting to discuss the implementation of internal reservation in recruitment of 56,000-plus jobs.

The SC (Right) and SC (Left) factions within the ruling Congress are divided over the internal reservation during the recruitment announced in the Cabinet meet last week. The state government had decided that the recruitment to fill 56,432 vacant posts will be based on the reservation order in force before December 28, 2022 (15% for SCs and 3% for STs), due to the stay on the enhanced quota and internal reservation.

Delegation to Delhi

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said that the Andhra Pradesh government is pressuring the Centre not to acquire lands for UKP - 3 and distribute compensation to land losers. Even the Maharashtra government is opposing the project which proposes to increase the Almatti dam height. "I will lead a delegation to Delhi to convince the Centre on the ground realities and the need to implement the project. We will meet our MPs in the national capital," he said.

Ashoka slams CM for asking voters to 'support son'

'Cooperate with Centre to overcome LPG shortage'

BENGALURU, DHNS

Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka on Saturday criticised Chief Minister Siddaramaiah for asking voters to support his son Yathindra Siddaramaiah, saying the appeal went against democratic values.

Ashoka was responding to Siddaramaiah's appeal made to his constituents in Mysuru on Friday, where he not only asserted that he would remain in politics and serve the people till his last breath, but also urged his voters to "support" his son like they had backed him.

Siddaramaiah recalled that he had started his political career in 1978 from the region. With the support of the people of Varuna and Chamundeshwari, he become the chief minister and presented 17 budgets, the CM said.

"I contested 13 elections and lost four times. But I continued to serve the people. As I am unable to frequent Varuna, my son is taking care of it. So, support my son," the chief minister said.

Reacting to the remarks, Ashoka told reporters, "By saying 'take care of my son', the CM has gone against Dr B R Ambedkar's ideals. This is democracy, not monarchy. Any candidate should win through the people's vote".

Ashoka also criticised the ruling Congress, saying the CM's camp was holding dinner meetings daily ever since D K Shivakumar hosted one.

"Congress leaders holding dinner meetings are not bothered if people are getting a full meal," he mocked.

The BJP leader alleged that many Congress legislators were themselves unhappy with the budget as they got no funds even for roads.

Admitting there was a LPG shortage due to the ongoing war, Ashoka asked the CM to extend cooperation to the Centre, instead of playing politics and "instigating" protests.

Bengaluru student drowns in Harangi backwaters

SUNTIKOPPA (KODAGU DISTRICT), DHNS: A 22-year-old student on a tour drowned in the backwaters of Harangi reservoir near Suntikoppa on Saturday.

The police identified the deceased as Sudarshan, a resident of Madurai, Tamil Nadu. He was pursuing PG studies in a private college in Bengaluru. A total of 18 students from the college had come to Kodagu for a trip. The mishap occurred when they had been to backwaters in the morning.

The body was retrieved by a team of expert divers. Suntikoppa police have a registered a case.

HC hikes relief to woman accident victim's kin

BENGALURU, DHNS

The high court has enhanced compensation to the dependents of a deceased accident victim, a housewife, while partly allowing an appeal filed by the husband and two sons.

The court cited an Apex Court judgement to rule that even in the case of a housewife, an addition towards future prospects is permissible while assessing compensation.

On October 21, 2014, Cheluvamba Arasu was travelling in a car on Bengaluru-Mysuru Road. On reaching Yellyur Kodi, Toobinakere, a truck collided with the car resulting in the death of Cheluvamba.

The husband and two sons of the deceased moved the tribunal claiming that as wife and mother, Cheluvamba was managing the household work.

On May 15, 2019, the accident tribunal, Mysuru awarded Rs 7.6 lakh total compensation, including Rs 6.6 lakh towards loss of dependency, along with interest at the rate of 6% per annum. The family members filed an appeal before the high court seeking a higher compensation.

Justice Tara Vitasta Ganju noted that the deceased Cheluvamba was 55 years old at the time of accident.

"The Supreme Court in the case of Rajendra Singh v/s National Insurance Co. Ltd. held that even in the case of a housewife, an addition towards future prospects is permissible while assessing compensation. The court observed that the contribution of a housewife to the family would naturally increase with age, experience and maturity; therefore, an addition towards future prospects must be made to the notional income while computing the loss of dependency," the court said.

It said the claimants are entitled to receive Rs 2,42,888 compensation over and above the amount awarded to by the tribunal and that the compensation under loss of dependency enhanced to Rs 8,22,888 as against Rs 6.6 lakh determined by the tribunal.

316 cylinders seized for misuse

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Legal Metrology Department on Saturday registered cases against persons using domestic LPG cylinders for commercial purposes, and seized a total of 316 cylinders.

These raids were conducted following several complaints alleging illegal supply and black marketing of domestic cylinders to hotels across various parts of the state. During the crackdown, 254 domestic cylinders were discovered and seized from various hotels in Peenya and Chikkajala in Bengaluru.

Officials also confiscated three cylinders in Shivamogga, 46 in Yadgir, and 13 in Davanagere.

Hotels hike rates as commercial cylinders cost huge in black market

Cooking oil turns pricey, menus trimmed

ASHWIN B M & AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

The weekend in Bengaluru hotels was grim as the LPG commercial cylinder remained a hard find. The cost on Friday for 19-kg LPG cylinder was Rs 3,000 to Rs 3,500 and on Saturday it jumped to Rs 5,000.

The popular restaurants which would be crowded hardly witnessed customers. Speaking to *DH*, Naveen Krishna, a manager of a Darshini in Jayanagar said, "Our main attraction is dosa and we have not touched the dosa tawas in four days. What will the customers come for?"

At other popular eateries, including the Bengaluru Cafe near Shivananda Circle, the crisis is visible. The management has already closed one branch, citing unsustainable costs. "We are paying triple the price just to keep the stoves burning. We've had to increase the price of every dish by at least Rs 10," said a manager at the cafe.

A plate of idli that cost Rs 30 is now retailing for Rs 40. Many hotels have also trimmed their menus, removing gas-heavy fried items to conserve fuel. Some kitchens have resorted to using firewood to prepare basic rice and sambar to serve loyal customers and students.

A new North Karnataka cuisine restaurant which was opened in the last week of February in South Bengaluru is now closed because of the crisis. "It was our new venture. We could not even run it for a month, we do not even know what to hope for," said Rajesh K, the proprietor.

Black marketing

Many restaurant managers also hinted at multiple black markets at play. "The suppliers know we have no other choice and that we will pay anything to keep our business afloat, so they are taking advantage of the situation," said Niranjan Kumar, owner of a small eatery in Padmanabhnagar.

"The supply chain is completely choked at the bottling plants. We are receiving less than 30% of our usual inventory. I have desperate restaurant owners calling me at midnight offering double the market rate, but I simply don't have the stock to give them," says a commercial gas distributor in Malleswaram.

A vehicle with empty commercial LPG cylinders waits outside a godown in Bengaluru on Saturday. DH PHOTO

Oil pricey

The industry is also reeling from a spike in edible oil prices, particularly palm oil, which is largely imported. The prices of the oil have gone up by Rs 6 to Rs 10 per litre depending on the brand. Both sunflower oil and groundnut, which are largely used for cooking, have seen the hike.

Local dry fruits outlets and chains of dry fruit outlets are anticipating a price hike. Suresh Raju, dry fruits dealer, said, "Supply has been reduced over the time. Now we are hearing that we might have to hike prices of dry fruits especially dates if the situation continues as all our high quality dates are imported from West Asia."

WAR SHOCKS

International bookings for April down by 50%: Travel agents

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

The ongoing conflict in West Asia has hit the International tourism industry, with people apprehensive over leaving the country. With summer vacations fast approaching, the city's travel agencies, which usually see booming business in April, shared that bookings were almost down by at least 50%.

"It is normal that people are worried about the war, but they are not educating themselves on the situation. They are unaware of the geography of the war and are hence apprehensive about travelling anywhere. Some people are wondering if air travel to South Asia will be impacted by the missiles in Iran," said Shamantha K, founder of Sanman Travels.

So far, he has received five bookings for April, a steep fall compared to the usual average of 15. "People who have booked trips to Dubai in April either cancelled or changed their destinations to south east asian countries," he added.

A majority of travel operators reported receiving bookings only to countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Japan, and Sri Lanka.

"People are also cancelling trips to Europe as most of the connecting flights are through Gulf countries. Tourists don't want to leave Asia and are only comfortable visiting southern and eastern parts of Asia, especially as flight prices in this region have not been majorly impacted," said Ram Kishore, manager, Bangalore Classic Tours and Travels, which has seem an almost 50% drop in bookings and enquiries.

For the month of April, Travelbell has only made 20 bookings. "We get 50-60 bookings in April usually. It's looking highly unlikely that we touch that number next month," said Riddham Jain, director of sales and operations.

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Cooking gas crisis: Many B'luru pubs opt for tandoor-rich menu

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

In order to accommodate the regular weekend rush, pubs and bars in Bengaluru are cutting down menus and are also stocking up on firewood and cooking oil, predicting that the prices of these goods are likely to shoot up soon.

Toit, with branches in Indiranagar and Mahadevapura, has stopped producing beer at its in-house brewery at Indiranagar.

"This will give us some leeway as we can divert the LPG stock used for brewing towards the kitchen. We have beer in stock. So, it should not impact our operations. If we run out of beer at the outlet, we can always supply more from our production brewery," Mukesh Tolani, its cofounder, said.

He also raised an alarm about the potential rise of prices for firewood and oil in the near future.

"It's a ripple effect that is going to impact various commodities. There has been a talk about the rise of these items lately," he added.

A few bars that serve wood-fired pizzas also shared the same concern.

Many have opted for a tandoor-rich menu. One among them is the 1522 chain of pubs with 13 outlets spread across the city.

"We have had to think of how to be innovative with the menu. We will also be prioritising dine-in over online orders," said Chethan Hegde, founder of the chain, predicting that breweries are likely to feel the burn of the LPG shortage more than regular bars.

"There is a small percentage of bars and breweries in the city that are dependent completely on GAIL, which supplies natural gas.

Wake-up call

Others, which are completely dependent on LPG, are having a hard time fighting over cylinders. This can be a wake-up call for the industry to look beyond LPG. Everything has its pros and cons," said Kuldeep Bharani, founder of Culinary Canvas Consultants.

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Send ships to guard strait...

Iran, From Page 3

As he urged nations to send ships to the strait, he said, "the U will be bombing the hell out of the shoreline, and continually shooting Iranian boats and ships out of the water. One way or the other, we will soon get Hormuz Strait OPEN, SAFE, and FREE!"

On Friday, the US military heavily bombed targets on Iran's Kharg Island, which handles almost all of Iran's crude exports, and Trump threatened to hit the island's oil infrastructure.

Reacting to Trump's threat, Iran vowed to attack facilities of US companies in the region if its energy infrastructure is targeted.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said Iran would act with caution to avoid targeting populated areas. US allies have been reluctant to provide military support to US-Israeli attacks, but have mobilised warships.

On Monday, President Emmanuel Macron visited a French aircraft carrier dispatched to the Mediterranean and said France and its allies are preparing a "defensive" mission to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. On Tuesday, a UK warship left port in southern England en route to the eastern Mediterranean to "bolster British defences in the region" after a drone attack on Britain's Akrotiri base in southern Cyprus.

Wildlife conflict worsens rehab delay woes for Kudremukh families

Activists urge govt to use CAMPA funds for relocation

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

A decade-long wait for rehabilitation by hundreds of families located in the enclaves of Kudremukh National Park (KNP) has led to hopelessness with activists urging the government to utilise the CAMPA funds to relocate them without delay.

Under Section 5(2) of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Rules, rehabilitation is among the 13 activities allowed to use the funds collected from agencies against the diversion of forest land. The funds are, however, managed by the National Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) at the Centre.

Despite Karnataka having Rs 1300 crore funds accrued all these years, the department has not been able to utilise it effectively for rehabilitation. In fact, the National Campa "deferred" the state's request for Rs 10 crore to rehabilitate 67 families by stating that officials have not submitted the necessary details like name of the village, total population (apart from those willing to relocate), availability of land for relocation and other details.

In the wake of the spread of Naxalism in Karnataka, the state government in 2005 issued a special package for voluntary relocation of the people living in the KNP. However, more than two decades later only 356 of the 1,382 families have been rehabilitated.

In the meantime, growing conflict with wildlife has added to the lack of infrastructure, health and other basic facilities for the people. In October 2025, two men were trampled to death by an elephant in Kerekatte range exacerbating the situation.

Too little, too late

Sudhakar K G of Kadkal village in Kerekatte range (Sringeri Taluk) of KNP told *DH* that his property was valued about two years ago.

"We have not heard any word from the authorities since then. In the last two years, the price of land and many commodities have gone up. The government should award compensation immediately after valuation or revise the amount on the basis of the prevailing market rates," he said.

A 50-year-old farmer with five dependent members in the family, Sudhakar said the government should not make people wait for years. "It's not easy leaving everything behind. We want the government to understand that and stop prolonging this process," he added.

Wildlife conservationist Veeresh G noted that the two men trampled by the elephant were waiting for members of families which have been looking forward for relocation for several years

"Some families are waiting for more than a decade. This delay is not only unjust to humans but also makes it difficult to manage the wildlife due to the continued anthropogenic activities. We need to speed up relocation for a win-win situation," he said, adding that the department's annual plan of action for 2026-27 should relocate at least a 100 families in KNP.

Members of a family in Kudremukh National Park stand in front of their house. Hundreds of families have been waiting for relocation for more than a decade, but the process has stalled due to lack of funds.

Rs 300 crore sought: Minister

Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar Khandre said he has issued clear instructions to officials to take all the necessary steps by March 20 to get at least Rs 300 crore CAMPA funds for 2026-27.

Noting that he had submitted a detailed proposal to Union environment minister Bhupender Yadav last year, the minister said voluntary relocation was one of his priorities. "I have now given clear direction to the nodal officer in the Forest Department to provide all the details under the CAMPA rule regarding the people who have consented to relocate from protected areas before March 20 so that all further action can be taken by the end of the month," he said.

15 honour killing cases reported...

Honour killing, From Flap

However, in his reply, Parameshwara informed that the Home department is taking all necessary measures to prevent honour killings. "All the police stations across the state have been directed to hear the grievances of people belonging to SC/ST communities. Our department is working in co-ordination with social welfare department and district administration to ensure that untouchability does not exist anywhere," he stated.

The Home Minister shared that the department is active through 112 emergency helplines, and day and night beats. "In case any inter-caste or inter-faith married couples face life threat and file complaints, action will be initiated according to the law and immediate personal security will be provided to such couples," Parameshwara said. Even if a dispute arises between the two families of the couple involved in the inter-caste marriage and if public harmony is at stake or if public property is damaged, preventive measures will be initiated, the minister added.

New IPL season reopens ...

IPL, From Page 3

Some parents who spoke to *DH* also expressed their helplessness. "I am ready to do anything to stop this new season. But our system is such that we are not able to stop such events even after such a big disaster," Ashwini said.

While several social workers and politicians visited the families initially, none of them stood by their words, Ashwini said. "From promises of providing counselling support to cope up with the situation to helping with the court case, many of them voluntarily came forward to offer support. But none of them stood by their words. If they cannot do it, people should not make fake promises," she said. Some parents hoped that children wouldn't fall for such mania about games.

◆ WEATHER ◆

Overview: Dry weather prevailed over Coastal Karnataka, South Interior Karnataka and North Interior Karnataka

Forecast March 15: Dry weather likely to prevail over the state.

INTERIOR NORTH

Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Belagavi	35.8	17.8	00
Bidar	37.6	20.5	00
Vijayapura	36.5	17	00
Dharwad	36	19.4	00
Haveri	35.8	21.4	00
Kalaburagi	39.4	24.6	00
Raichur	37.4	22.4	00
COASTAL			
Honnavar	33	24.1	00
Karwar	35.6	25.6	00
Shirali	NA	NA	NA
Mangaluru	33.5	25.7	00

INTERIOR SOUTH

Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Agumbe	NA	19.7	00
Bengaluru	33.2	21.1	00
Ballari	NA	NA	NA
Chamarajanagar	NA	NA	NA
Chikkamagaluru	NA	NA	NA
Chitradurga	35.5	20.3	00
Davangere	36	17	00
Hassan	34.2	14	00
Mysuru	34	17.8	00
Madikeri	NA	NA	NA
Kolar	33.6	15.2	00

OTHER STATIONS

New Delhi	32.6	18.1	00
Kolkata	35.7	25.6	00
Mumbai	37	23.3	00
Chennai	34.3	24	00
Pune	37.8	19.3	00
Hyderabad	37.6	22.9	00
Th'puram	33.5	24.4	00

Publishers: List of books for school libraries full of errors

Say it wrongly attributes some books to them

BENGALURU , DHNS:

Printers and publishers in the state have raised objection to the books selected by the School Education and Literacy department through Samagra Shikshana Karnataka (SSK) for the school libraries, saying 'it is full of false information'.

Several publishers, including Chanda Pustaka of writer Vasudhendra, have released media statements raising objections to the list.

In a statement, Vasudhendra said, "The list released by the department has the book 'God of Small Things' by Arundhati Roy. Unfortunately, the department says that this book was published by Nava Karnataka Prakashana. But this book has not been published in Kannada by any publisher so far. We recently got the translation rights of this book and even a big royalty amount has been paid to the writer. When the translation work is going on and the book will be published in a few months, the department putting out such false information has hurt us immensely".

Vasudhendra urged the department to withdraw the list and release a fresh one with proper information.

A few other publishers alleged that the books not published by them had been shown against their names. Premachandra U, executive director, Nava Karnataka Prakashana, said, "At least 35 books have been listed under our publishing house's name. This shows irresponsibility and an attempt to tarnish the image of our publication. We urge the department to initiate action against officials who prepared the list".

"For lower primary schools, there is a provision to purchase books worth Rs 5,000 each. Among the list released for lower primary schools, only five books are in Kannada and the rest 27 in English. Does the government expect lower primary school children to read only English books?" another publisher said.

The publishers alleged that the list was released on March 9, insisting that schools purchase the books before March 30.

KSRTC to run 2,000 additional buses to clear festival rush

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) will operate 2,000 additional buses across the state to manage the expected surge in passenger traffic during the upcoming Ugadi and Eid-ul-Fitr festivals.

According to the transport corporation, the special services will run on March 18, 19 and 20, ahead of Ugadi on March 19 and Eid-ul-Fitr on March 21. Additional return services will also be operated from various intra- and inter-state destinations to Bengaluru on March 22.

Special buses will depart from the Kempegowda Bus Station in Bengaluru to several major destinations, including Dharmasthala, Kukke Subrahmanya, Shivamogga, Hassan, Mangaluru, Hubballi, Belagavi, Kalaburagi and Ballari, among others. Additional services will also run from the Mysuru Road Bus Station towards Mysuru, Hunsur, Kushalanagar and Madikeri.

Bookings can be made in advance through the KSRTC website and reservation counters across Karnataka and neighbouring states. The corporation said a 5% discount will be offered when four or more passengers book together, while a 10% discount will be available on return-journey tickets booked with onward travel.

Cops take suo motu case...

Student, From Page 3

"However, the boy's parents have refused to file a complaint and hence, no FIR has been registered. We will issue a notice to the accused to take further action," the officer said. Meanwhile, an activist from the pro-Kannada organisation, who had posted about the incident on social media along with the child's photograph, has been instructed to delete it immediately as it involves the Juvenile Justice Act.

Modi targets Didi over SIR; BJP, TMC workers clash

Modi, From Page 3

"They are even opposing the removal of deceased people from the rolls," he said, adding that Mamata's government turned a blind eye to illegal immigration for electoral gains, and this has not only changed the demography in several areas of the state, but also turned into a threat to national security.

"When it comes to giving citizenship to persecuted Hindu refugees, TMC opposes it because they do not consider them their vote bank," Modi said, setting the tone for BJP's poll campaign.

As many as 63.66 lakh voters — around 8.3% of the electorate — have been struck off the electoral rolls since SIR was launched in Nov 2025, bringing down the size of the electorate from about 7.66 crore to over 7.04 crore.

Besides, more than 60.06 lakh voters have been placed in "under adjudication" category. Their eligibility to vote is now being determined through legal scrutiny by over 500 judicial officers, under the monitoring of the Calcutta HC and the Supreme Court. Nearly 15 lakh cases have been adjudicated so far. Nearly 200 more judicial officers from Jharkhand and Odisha will be deployed across West Bengal soon to expedite the process.

VTU launches 'She Innovates' programme to promote women-led startups

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) has launched a programme called 'She Innovates' to encourage women entrepreneurs in its affiliated colleges.

The initiative, designed as an entrepreneurship and incubation programme for pre-final-year female students at VTU, has already attracted over 5,000 registrations.

The programme aims to help create 100 women-led startups within one year.

It has been launched under the university's Visvesvaraya Research and Innovation Foundation (VRIF).

The initiative is being supported by ecosystem partners Wipro, JAN AI, UN Women, Karnataka Digital Economy Mission (KDEM), and the TiE (The Institution of Engineers) chapters of Hubballi, Bengaluru, Mangaluru and Mysuru.

During the launch event held on Saturday, Madan Padaki, the founder of JAN AI, highlighted the country's opportunity to build locally relevant artificial intelligence pathways and partner-driven deployments to address the socio-economic challenges at the rural and district levels.

Representing Wipro, Sanjeev Jain, chief operating officer, expressed enthusiasm for expanding generative AI innovation to rural India and described the initiative as timely and impactful.

The CEO announced Wipro's commitment across four key engagement pillars: conducting the Yukti Manthan hackathons, training the students in problem-solving and in innovation, providing mentorship from the Wipro employees and in offering joint certification for the programme participants.

The company also emphasised long-term campus engagement and continued collaboration with VTU's VRIF.

Seven-step model

Further elaborating on the programme's execution framework, Manoj Madhusudhan, global head of AI and Data Decision Intelligence at Wipro, presented the seven-step 'She Innovates' execution model.

The initial phases include registration and problem capture, AI-assisted discovery of problem statements, and formation of cross-college teams.

He said the programme will include technical onboarding using platforms such as Hugging Face and Gradio, followed by structured hackathons, evaluation and shortlisting, and incubation or acceleration pathways for selected teams to ensure continuity and startup development.

Growing enrolment

VTU Vice-Chancellor Vidyashankar highlighted the growing enrolment of women in engineering and stressed the need to nurture women entrepreneurs. He urged industry partners to actively support Tier-2 and Tier-3 colleges so that students can address real problems from rural India and build grassroots innovations.

Santosh Ittanagi of VTU's VRIF, Asma Sudhakar from Wipro, Atanu Batabyal, and Manoj Menon from Head Held High Foundation were present in the programme.

CORRIGENDUM NO. 2

Corrigendum No. 2 for Tender Notice No.: Mech-LMG-ET-14-2025-26; dtd.: 19-02-2026. Name of the work : Turnkey contract for the work of Supply, Installation, Commissioning of Plant/ Equipment & Related Infrastructure and Operation of Mechanized Laundry at Badarpur, Collection of soiled linen from coaches from Agartala, Silchar, Sairang Railway station and loading of washed linen into coaches at Agartala, Silchar, Sairang Railway station for a period of 10 years under BOOT (Build- Own - Operate- Transfer) Basis and Transportation of linen from BOOT Laundry to nominated Stations including onboard distribution of linen to passenger, blanket repair & stitching of curtains. **Tender Closing Date: 13:00** hrs. on **30-03-2026**. Details are as under:-
New Items Added: Documents

S No.	Document Description	File Name
1	Corrigendum 2	Corrigendum-2.pdf
2	Modified Tender Document 2	ApprovedTD3.pdf

For Detail please visit N.F. Railway website **www.ireps.gov.in**

Sr. DME/Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF KARNATAKA
(Established by an Act of the Parliament in 2009)
Kadaganchi, Aland road, Kalaburagi-585 367., Phone (08477)-226722
Website: www.cuk.ac.in, Email: registrar@cuk.ac.in

TENDER NOTICE

Offline Re-Tender bids are invited for and on behalf of the Central University of Karnataka from eligible and experienced contractors for execution of the following works at the CUK Campus:

1. Watershed Management Works in approximately 30 acres of Plantation Terrain Area of CUK Campus under the NBCC Project.
2. Lifting and laying black soil in the Pits and Trenches of Plantation area in approximately40 acres of Terrain Area of CUK Campus under the NBCC Project.

The detailed tender document containing scope of work, eligibility criteria, technical specifications, and terms & conditions can be downloaded from the University **website: www.cuk.ac.in**

Sd/-
REGISTRAR

Government of Jharkhand
Jharkhand Flying Institute
A Society Regd. Under Department of Cabinet Secretariat & Vigilance (Civil Aviation Division)
State Hangar, Birsa Munda Airport, Hinoo Ranchi-834002
E-mail-jfi.govtfly@gmail.com, Website-www.jharkhandaviation.in

Ref No.:AME Center/Dumka/15/2026/JFI-152/Ranchi, Dated:-13.03.2026

e-TENDER NOTICE

e-Tenders under **TWO BID SYSTEM** are hereby invited by Jharkhand Flying Institute (JFI) from organizations/institutions/ private agencies **For establishment, operation and management of an Aircraft Maintenance Engineering (AME) Training Institute as per DGCA CAR-66 under DGCA CAR-147 (Basic) Regulations at Jharkhand Flying Institute (JFI) Dumka Airport, Dumka on PPP Mode.** as per the following schedule of events:

1.	Tender Ref. No.	AME Center/Dumka/15/2026/JFI-152, Dated:-13.03.2026
2.	Name of Work	e-bids are hereby invited by the Jharkhand Flying Institute, Govt. of Jharkhand For establishment, operation and management of an Aircraft Maintenance Engineering (AME) Training Institute as per DGCA CAR-66 under DGCA CAR-147 (Basic) Regulations at Jharkhand Flying Institute (JFI) Dumka Airport, Dumka on PPP Mode.
3.	Tender Participation	Rs. 10,000/- (Rs. Ten Thousand only) Through Online Mode (Non-Refundable)
4.	Publish of Tender on website & Start of Downloading Tender Documents	13/03/2026, 06:00 P.M.
5.	Pre Bid Meeting	16/03/2026, 12:30 P.M.
6.	Start of Submission of e-bids	17/03/2026, 06:00 PM
7.	Last date for submission of e-bids.	08/04/2026 03:30 PM
8.	Opening of Technical Bids.	09/04/2026 03:30 PM
9.	Opening of Financial Bids.	After scrutiny of the Technical Bid
10.	Award of agreement	Shall be notified later
11.	Officer Inviting e-Tender	Managing Director, Jharkhand Flying Institute, Govt. of Jharkhand
12.	Officer Name/ Mob. No. for further enquiry	Mr. Rathour Nitant K. Singh, Section Officer Mob. No. 9472749978, E-Mail- jfi.govtfly@gmail.com

For further details visit-www.jharkhandaviation.in and for applying online, please visit **www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in**

Sd/-
Capt. S.P. Sinha
Managing Director,
Jharkhand Flying Institute

PR 375062 (Civil Aviation)25-26*D

EVEREADY INDUSTRIES INDIA LTD.
#7/1A (Part), KIADB Industrial Area, Somanhalli, Maddur Taluk
Mandya District, Karnataka State-571428 **Tel No. 9952960023**

SALE OF SCRAP ITEMS

Invites sealed Bids for the sale of solid scrap material on periodic basis like Tin Scrap, Paper Scrap, PVC Scrap, Wood Scrap, Plastic Scrap, Broken Mild Steel scrap etc. Interested Parties registered with KSPCB may contact Material Department between 11.00 AM to 2.00 PM from **16th March 2026 to 23rd March 2026.** Last Date for submission of Sealed Quotation with EMD amount of Rs. 4,00,000/- is **27th March 2026.**

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN : U40109KA1999SGC025521)

No: CEE/BGKT/Tr(OP)Z/SEE (O)/AEE-3/2025-26/21169-73 Date: 12.03.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION
(THROUGH KPP PORTAL MODE ONLY)

KPTCL invites Tender for following Services required for Transmission Zone KPTCL Bagalkote.

1) Bid Enquiry No: KPTCL/CEE/BGKT/OTZ/2025-26/SERVICE/SECURITY-GUARD/PKG-1 Tender No. KPTCL/2025-26/SE2357 for Providing Manpower Services of Security Guards to various KPTCL Offices and Stations coming in Operations Divisions, KPTCL, Bagalkote and Vijaypur under the jurisdiction of Operations Transmission Zone, KPTCL, Bagalkote. **Quantity : 33 Nos**

2) Bid Enquiry No: KPTCL/CEE/BGKT/OTZ/2025-26/SERVICE/SECURITY-GUARD/PKG-2 Tender No. KPTCL/2025-26/SE2358 for Providing Manpower Services of Security Guards to various KPTCL Offices and Stations coming in Operations Divisions, KPTCL, Belagavi and Chikkodi under the jurisdiction of Operations Transmission Zone, KPTCL, Bagalkote. **Quantity : 36 Nos**

3) Bid Enquiry No: KPTCL/CEE/BGKT/OTZ/2025-26/SERVICE/SECURITY-GUARD/PKG-3 Tender No. KPTCL/2025-26/SE2359 for Providing Manpower Services of Security Guards to various KPTCL Offices and Stations coming in Operations Divisions, KPTCL, Hubballi and Gadag under the jurisdiction of Operations Transmission Zone, KPTCL, Bagalkote. **Quantity : 27 Nos**

Availability of tender documents in KPP Portal: On or after 16.03.2026 at 04.00 pm onwards and last date & time for receipt of tender: 15.04.2026 up to 05.30 pm

No: CEE/BGKT/Tr(OP)Z/SEE (O)/AEE-7/2025-26/21174-88 Date: 12.03.2026

KPTCL invites Tender for procurement of following materials required for Operation Divisions coming under Operation Zone, KPTCL, Bagalkote conforming to our Specifications, F.O.R.D at Store/site including insurance and transportation and un-loading.

1) Tender No: KPTCL/2025-26/IND0288 for Supply of Safety / T&P materials like Rubber Hand gloves, Safety belt, Safety Helmet etc.

2) Tender No: KPTCL/2025-26/IND0289 for Supply and installation of Furniture

3) Tender No: KPTCL/2025-26/IND0290 for Supply of Safety / T&P materials like Insulated GOS Operating Handle / Rod, Chain saw, Manilla rope etc

4) Tender No: KPTCL/2025-26/IND0291 for Supply of Safety / T&P materials like Insulation Tester Digital type, SF6 Gas leak detector, Bolt Cutter

Availability of tender documents in KPP Portal: On or after16.03.2026 at 05.30 pm onwards and last date & time for receipt of tender: 30.03.2026 up to 04.30 pm

The tenders will be received through E-procurement portal only. The Detailed notification regarding subject enquiry in the E-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to KPTCL website **https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in** with hyperlink 'E Procurement KPTCL' or **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** Further details can be had from the office of the under signed during office hours.

Sd/- Chief Engineer (Ele)., Transmission (Operations) Zone, KPTCL, Near Sector No.45, Navanagar, Bagalkote - 587103.

WEST ASIA CRISIS: 22 ships still stuck near Strait of Hormuz; 2 LPG carriers sail through

India in touch with all to ensure energy security: MEA

ANIRBAN BHAUMIK & AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

India has been in touch with all stakeholders to ensure its energy security amid the West Asia conflict, although a consensus on the issue has remained elusive within BRICS, which it has been chairing since January 1.

Even as Indian merchant vessels 'Shivalik' and 'Nanda Devi' have passed through the Strait of Hormuz safely with over 92,000 MT of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and will reach the ports of Mundra and Kandla on Tuesday and Wednesday, respectively, New Delhi has asked Tehran for safe passage for the remaining 22 ships, which remain stuck.

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said New Delhi was in touch with not only Iran but also all the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations, Israel, and the United States.

"India has continuously emphasised that one of its priorities has been the need to ensure unimpeded transit of goods and energy. We have also called for the avoidance of targeting civilian infrastructure, including energy infrastructure, across the region," Jaiswal told journalists on Saturday.

Of the 22 Indian-flagged vessels, six are LPG vessels, one is a liquefied natural gas (LNG) carrier, four are crude oil tankers, one is carrying chemical products, three are container ships, and two are bulk carriers. Of the remaining, one is a dredger, and another is empty, holding no cargo. Three others are on dry docks, meaning on routine maintenance.

SECURING SUPPLY

- LPG carrier 'Shivalik' likely to reach Mundra port on Monday
- 'Nanda Devi' to dock at Gujarat's Kandla port on Tuesday
- Vessels carrying 92,700 tonnes LPG
- Of the 22 vessels stuck, 6 carrying LPG, 1 LNG, and 4 crude oil
- Ships also have 611 seafarers

"These ships have 611 seafarers," Rajesh Kumar Sinha, Special Secretary in the Ministry of Shipping, said, adding that Indian authorities, including DG Shipping, are closely monitoring the situation.

Close to half of India's crude oil imports, nearly 2.5 million barrels per day, as well as a sizeable share of its liquefied natural gas (LNG) and LPG supplies, are typically transported through the Strait of Hormuz.

Tehran has nudged India, which holds the rotating chair of the BRICS now, to get the bloc to condemn the military offensive Israel and the US launched on Iran.

"Some members of the BRICS are directly involved in the current situation in the West Asia region, which has impacted forging a consensus on a common BRICS position on the ongoing conflict," said Jaiswal.

"As the chair of BRICS, India has been facilitating discussions among members through the Sherpa channel. The last virtual BRICS Sherpa meeting was held on March 12," he added

People stand in a queue with their empty LPG cylinders outside a gas agency amid supply disruptions following the US-Israeli conflict with Iran, in Magam town, Kashmir. REUTERS

Commercial LPG sale starts in 29 states

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The central government on Saturday said that the distribution of commercial LPG cylinders — halted for a couple of days as the focus was on domestic-side supply — had begun in 29 states and Union Territories (UTs), even as authorities had stepped up raids and surprise inspections across the country to curb hoarding and black-marketing.

WAR SHOCKS

Commercial LPG cylinders had been placed at the disposal of state governments to prioritise distribution among consumers, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas Joint Secretary Sujata Sharma told reporters here.

Authorities, including the police and oil-marketing companies (OMCs), had also intensified enforcement to curb hoarding and black-marketing in many states, and FIRs had been registered against LPG distributorships and retail outlets in several places for indulging in illegal activities, she added.

While appealing to the public not to queue at LPG distributors or engage in panic-booking, she said enough stock was available to meet domestic household requirements of cooking gas as the domestic production of LPG had increased 31%.

"The situation is a matter of concern for all of us, but we are ensuring that household consumers do not face inconvenience. Domestic consumers have been prioritised," she said, adding that LPG refill bookings had surged sharply due to panic-buying.

She noted that panic-booking had caused the number of bookings to rise to about 75 lakh on Friday, and around 88 lakh on Saturday. She appealed to consumers to book cylinders only when they were required.

Before the West Asia conflict, daily bookings totalled around 55 lakh and OMCs delivered 50 lakh cylinders per day. While the cylinder deliveries did not change, bookings had surged.

India, she said, had adequate crude oil inventories, and domestic refineries were operating at full capacity, ensuring sufficient availability of petrol and diesel across the country. "There are no dry-out reports from any retail outlets," she said.

She also clarified that LPG booking restrictions were linked to the time gap between two deliveries. "In urban areas, there is a minimum gap of 25 days between the last delivery and the next booking, while in rural areas, the gap is 45 days. If consumers try to book before this window, the booking will not take place.".

Sharma also said that state-run GAIL had met city gas distribution operators and asked them to provide piped natural gas (PNG) connections to commercial consumers facing LPG supply constraints.

Food outlets using induction stoves to get subsidy in TN

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
CHENNAI, DHNS

The Tamil Nadu government on Saturday announced that restaurants, tea stalls, cloud kitchens, and food production units that use induction stoves will receive a subsidy of Rs 2 per unit for additional electricity consumed.

Chief Minister M K Stalin, who chaired a high-level meeting, said the subsidy will remain in force until restrictions imposed on the availability of commercial LPG cylinders by the Centre are lifted.

J Radhakrishnan, Additional Chief Secretary and Chairman of TANGEDCO, said the government has also decided to help Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) by sanctioning loans with subsidies for purchasing electric equipment, such as electric stoves and heaters.

He said as many as 60,698 factories use fuels such as LPG, CNG, diesel, furnace oil, and firewood.

"These industries will now be allowed to temporarily switch to alternative fuels such as kerosene, RDF, HSD, and biomass instead of LPG and CNG. They don't have to apply for fresh approval from the pollution control board. They have to inform authorities in advance," he said.

We have allowed some ships: Iranian envoy Fathali

NEW DELHI, PTI: Amid the escalating conflict in West Asia, Iranian ambassador to India, Mohammad Fathali, on Saturday said Iran has "allowed some ships" to pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

Mohammad Fathali

He, however, did not specify the number of vessels that have been allowed to pass through.

During an interactive session at an event, Fathali was asked if Iran has "allowed passage to Indian ships" stranded in the Strait of Hormuz and for how many days, given the looming LPG shortage, and the series of telephonic conversations between the foreign ministers of the two countries.

"Yes, we have allowed, but let me not tell how many," he said.

As several India-flagged vessels remain stranded in the Strait of Hormuz due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia, Fathali on Friday had told reporters that "we will try our best" to resolve the issue.

'Common interests'

Fathali also emphasised that Iran and India have historical relations, and added, "I believe Iran and India also have common interests."

"I also believe if there is any rift or gap between these two countries, their enemies will use it... Both sides have the maturity that they can handle these political and social issues together and solve everything," he said.

He was asked about the phone call on Thursday night between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, during which they discussed the "serious situation" in West Asia. "We are now supporting each other," Fathali said, and asserted that Indians also feel the pain Iranians are suffering. "We have to enhance the relationship between India and Iran."

When asked if the country anticipated such an attack, he said, "Iran is ready for negotiations and the war. But we prefer negotiations... "

Govt working to minimise impact of global conflicts: PM

SILCHAR, PTI: Asserting that the Centre was working to minimise the impacts of global conflicts on the people, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday alleged that the opposition Congress was acting "irresponsibly" by trying to create panic in the country.

Narendra Modi

Addressing a public meeting in Assam's Silchar after unveiling projects worth over Rs 23,550 crore, Modi alleged that the Congress had ignored the development of the Northeast for decades, and allowed a drawing of the border during Independence that cut off Barak Valley's access to the sea.

"As the world is facing wars, our effort is to minimise their impact on the people of the country. The Congress should have performed the role of a responsible political party, but it failed to do so. It is trying to create panic among the people," he alleged.

"They do not have any vision either for Assam or the nation, but only know how to abuse Modi, spread rumours, lies, and create false reels to mislead people," the PM claimed.

Modi also took on the Congress over its shirtless protest at the AI Impact Summit in Delhi last month, accusing the party of defaming the nation.

MP teacher suspended for mimicking PM over LPG prices

SHIVPURI, PTI: A government school teacher in Madhya Pradesh's Shivpuri district was suspended after a video of him mimicking Prime Minister Narendra Modi while making satirical remarks on LPG cylinder prices went viral on social media, an official said on Saturday.

Saket Purohit, a teacher at a government primary school in Adivasi Mohalla Semarkhedi under Pohri block, was suspended with immediate effect late Friday night under the Madhya Pradesh Civil Services Rules, District Education Officer Vivek Srivastava said.

In the video, Purohit is heard saying that rising gas prices could force people to return to rotis cooked on traditional stoves, narrowing the gap between rich and poor.

The district education office began a probe after the video went viral and a written complaint was submitted by Preetam Lodhi, BJP MLA from Pichhore.

Srivastava said Purohit was suspended after the inquiry found his conduct violated rules applicable to government servants.

During the suspension period, Purohit will be attached to the block education office in Badarwas and will receive a subsistence allowance as per the rules, the official added.

Purohit, however, termed the action one-sided, telling reporters he neither received a show-cause notice nor was allowed to present his side. "Action taken without a hearing is not justified," he said.

Non-essential crew of IRIS Lavan depart India; ship remains docked

India has repatriated the non-essential crew members of an Iranian warship that docked in Kochi on March 4 amid the escalating military conflict between Iran and the US, reports PTI. Over 50 of the 183 crew members have stayed back as the ship, IRIS Lavan, remains in Kochi.

11 Indians pose as 'victims' of robberies in US to get visas

SATISH JHA
AHMEDABAD, DHNS

The United States Department of Justice has charged 11 Indian nationals for allegedly participating in "staged armed robberies" to seek immigration benefits as victims of violent crimes.

Over several years, numerous similar cases have highlighted such "crimes" as a common modus operandi of individuals seeking US visas.

While their states of origin have not been disclosed, the fact that all individuals share the Patel surname suggests a possible link to Gujarat. Travel industry sources said they were mostly from Mehsana, and reached the US illegally.

Those charged have been identified as Jitendrakumar Patel (39), Maheshkumar Patel, Sanjaykumar Patel (45), Dipikaben Patel (40), Rameshbhai Patel (52), Amitabahen Patel (43), Ronakkumar Patel (28), Sangitaben Patel (36), Minkesh Patel (42),

US STATE DEPT SAYS

- Staged robberies let clerks falsely claim on U visa application that they were violent crime victims
- The clerks and/or owners would wait five or more minutes before calling police to report 'crime'
- U visa available to victims of crimes who suffered mental, physical abuse and helped in probe, prosecution

Sonal Patel (42) and Mitul Patel (40). Dipika was deported to India after being caught for illegal stay.

A US Attorney's Office, District of Massachusetts, statement said, "Defendants allegedly participated in staged armed robberies so that 'victims' could apply for immigration benefits."

It alleged that the conspiracy began in March 2023 when Rambhai Patel and his co-conspirators staged robberies at at least six convenience stores, liquor stores and fast food restaurants in Massachusetts and elsewhere.

In August 2025, Rambhai Patel (37) was sentenced to 20 months and eight days in prison and forfeiture of $850,000. It was found that he and co-accused, Balwinder Singh, had carried out similar staged robberies of at least 18 convenience or liquor stores and fast-food restaurants across the US, including five in Massachusetts.

"It is alleged that the purpose of the staged robberies was to allow clerks present to falsely claim that they were victims of a violent crime on an application for U non-immigration status (U Visa)," the statement read. It says that a U visa is available to victims of certain crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and have been helpful to law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of crimes.

POLL PREPARATIONS

BJP advances candidate picks in Kerala, Bengal

AMRITA MADHUKALYA
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The BJP's Central Election Committee (CEC) has finalised candidates for over 100 seats in Kerala and around 135–150 seats in West Bengal. Lists for both poll-bound states are expected soon.

The CEC met this week at the residence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, marking the first time such a meeting has been held there.

In Kerala, the BJP is likely to contest over 100 seats, with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) contesting all 140 Assembly constituencies in the state. Apart from Bharatiya Jana Dharma Sena, four or five smaller parties are expected to contest alongside the NDA. Seat-sharing with these allies was also discussed at the meeting. Broadly, the BJP will contest around 100 seats, leaving 25–30 for the Bharatiya Jana Dharma Sena and the remaining for other allies.

Party leaders believe that for the NDA in Kerala, the number of seats won is more important than the number of seats contested. This time, the BJP has decided to put its full strength behind all the seats it contests. In the last Assembly elections, the party contested 115 seats but failed to win any.

Among the prominent faces the BJP may field are Union Minister George Kurien, former Union ministers Rajeev Chandrasekhar and V Muraleedharan, and former state president K Surendran.

Chandrasekhar could contest from the Nemom seat, which the BJP won in 2016 through veteran leader O Rajagopal. In 2021, V Sivankutty of the CPM won the seat.

Muraleedharan could contest from Kazhakkoottam Assembly constituency, while Surendran may be fielded from Manjeswaram seat.

In Thrissur, where the BJP won the parliamentary seat in 2024, Padmaja Venugopal, daughter of former chief minister K Karunakaran and a former Congress leader, may be fielded. Senior leader Shobha Surendran could contest from Palakkad or Alappuzha.

Primary criteria

Deliberations were also held on the party's prospects in West Bengal, with decisions taken on over 135–155 seats. For Bengal, leaders said, the Prime Minister's direction was that a candidate's popularity among voters and winnability should be the primary criteria.

"In seats where the party's loss margin was small and in constituencies with a significant minority population, candidates will be announced soon so that there is enough time to work on them," an MP from the state said.

FORM A
PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT
(Under Regulation 6 of the IBBI (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Regulations, 2016

FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE CREDITORS OF ACE EMBEDDED INTENSIVE CARE UNITS PRIVATE LIMITED

RELEVANT PARTICULARS		
1.	Name of corporate debtor	ACE EMBEDDED INTENSIVE CARE UNITS PRIVATE LIMITED
2.	Date of incorporation of corporate debtor	23rd July 2018
3.	Authority under which corporate debtor are incorporated / registered	ROC- Karnataka Incorporated under the Companies Act, 2013
4.	Corporate Identity No.	U74999KA2018PTC114976
5.	Address of the registered office and principal office (if any) of corporate debtor	Registered address: No 9 TKN Tower, Bannerghatta Road, Bengaluru - 560076
6.	Insolvency commencement date in respect of corporate debtor	10th March 2026
7.	Estimated date of closure of insolvency resolution process	06th September 2026
8.	Name and registration number of the insolvency professional acting as Interim Resolution Professional (IRP)	Beleyur Resolutions Private Limited Represented by its Director and Insolvency professional Ravindra Beleyur Reg. No. IBBI/IPE-0163/IPA-1/2023-24/50073
9.	Address and e-mail of the Interim Resolution Professional, as registered with the Board	'Shreevathsa', 428, 19th B Cross, 3rd Block, Jayanagar, Bengaluru - 560 011 Tel: +91 80 26540193 Email: ip@beleyur.com
10.	Address and e-mail to be used for correspondence with the Interim Resolution Professional	Beleyur Resolutions Private Limited 'Shreevathsa', 428, 19th B Cross, 3d Block, Jayanagar, Bengaluru - 560 011 Tele: +91 80 26540193 Email: cirp-aceembedded@beleyur.in
11.	Last date for submission of claims	29th March 2026.
12.	Classes of creditors, if any, under clause (b) of sub-section (6A) of section 21, ascertained by the IRP	Not Applicable
13.	Names of Insolvency Professionals identified to act as Authorised Representative of creditors in a class	Not Applicable
14.	(a) Relevant Forms and (b) Details of authorised representatives are available at:	(a) Web link- https://www.ibbi.gov.in/home/downloads (b) Not Applicable

Notice is hereby given that the Hon'ble National Company Law Tribunal, Bengaluru has ordered the commencement of a Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process of ACE Embedded Intensive Care Units Private Limited under CIRP on 10th March 2026(Order received on 12th March 2026).

The creditors of ACE Embedded Intensive Care Units Private Limited under CIRP are hereby called upon to submit their claims with proof on or before 29th March 2026 to the Interim Resolution Professional at the address mentioned against entry No.10.

The financial creditors shall submit their claims with proof by electronic means only. All other creditors may submit the claims with proof in person, by post or by electronic means.

Submission of false or misleading proofs of claim shall attract penalties.

For Beleyur Resolutions Private Limited (IPE)-
Interim Resolution Professional of
ACE Embedded Intensive Care Units Private Limited
Sd/-
(Ravindra Beleyur)
Director and Insolvency Professional

Date: 14th March 2026
Place: Bengaluru

Government of Karnataka
HINDU RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND CHARITABLE ENDOWMENTS DEPARTMENT
Commissioner's Office, 4th Floor, Minto Sri Anjaneya Bhawan, Aluru Venkatarao Road, Chamarajpet, Bangalore-18,
Tel: 26709689/ 26706775, Email: endowmentcommissioner@gmail.com.

No:ADM/01/293/2025-E- 1743497 Date: 13.03.2026

SHORT TERM E-TENDER

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DIPR/CP/SSC/6269/2025-26

PUBLIC NOTICE
(Under Section 102(1) & (2) of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016)

For the attention of the Creditors of Sri. Anil Heeroji Lad and Smt. Aarti A Lad -Debtors/Personal Guarantors to M/s. AHL Mining Company Private Limited (U13100KA2005PTC036340)

RELEVANT PARTICULARS		
1.	Name and Address of the Debtors/Personal Guarantors	1. Sri. Anil Heeroji Lad, 2. Smt. Aarti A Lad, No 12, 1st Main, 1st cross, NTI Layout, Dollars Colony, Rajmahalvilas Extension II Stage, Bengaluru – 560094 And also at House of Lads, Palace Road, Ashok Colony Sandur, Bellary – 583119 And also at No.140, 8th Cross, III Main, HIG Dollar Colony, RMV II Stage Extension, Bengaluru – 560094
2.	Details of the order & Insolvency Commencement date in respect of Debtor/ Personal Guarantor	1. Sri. Anil Heeroji Lad: CP (IB) No.28/BB/2024 on 11th March 2026 2. Smt. Aarti A Lad: CP (IB) No.29/BB/2024 on 11th March 2026
3.	Name , registration number , email id and address of the Insolvency Professional acting as Resolution Professional (RP) for correspondence	Ravindra Beleyur IBBI/IPA-001/IP-P00189/2017-18/10368 No.428, 19th B Cross, 3rd Block, Jayanagar, Bengaluru - 560 011 Tele: +91 80 26540193 Email: ravi@beleyur.com
4.	Last date for submission of claims	4th April 2026
5.	Relevant forms in which claim to be filed available at	Weblink: www.ibbi.gov.in/home/downloads

Notice is hereby given that the Hon'ble National Company Law Tribunal, Bengaluru has ordered the commencement of the Insolvency resolution process against Sri. Anil Heeroji Lad & Smt. Aarti A Lad Debtors/Personal Guarantors to M/s AHL Mining Company Private Limited on 11th March 2026.

Creditors of the above Personal Guarantors in the matter of debt availed by M/s AHL Mining Company Private Limited are hereby called upon to submit their claims with proof on or before 4th April 2026 in the prescribed format to the Resolution Professional at the address mentioned against entry No. 3.

Financial creditors shall submit their claims with proof by electronic means only. All other creditors may submit the claims with proof in person, by post or by electronic means.

Submission of false or misleading proofs of claim shall attract penalties

Sd/-
(Ravindra Beleyur)
Insolvency Professional
Reg. No. IBBI/IPA-001/IP-P00189/2017-18/10368

Date: 14.03.2026
Place: Frankfort

POLITICAL PRIORITY Beijing adopting inward-looking policy stance in the near term

China seeks tech self-reliance amid geopolitical tensions

DEVENDRA KUMAR

Chinese President Xi Jinping (left) and other leaders attend the closing session of the National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 12. AP/PTI

China's annual legislative sessions of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference - collectively known as the "two sessions" - concluded on 12 March. The meetings unveiled the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026–2030). The Government Work Report delivered by Premier Li Qiang and the draft plan reinforce technological self-reliance as the guiding principle of China's broader economic strategy.

China's annual "two sessions" rarely produce surprises, and the announcements largely echoed positions already outlined in official meetings and speeches since the Fourth Plenum of the 20th Party Congress in October 2025. The party leadership reiterated that "managing the country's own affairs well" has become a key mantra. Central to this approach is achieving breakthroughs in core technologies to drive innovation, sustain economic growth and shield the domestic economy from geopolitical and geoeconomic disruptions.

Short-term vulnerabilities

The 15th Five-Year Plan has been unveiled against the backdrop of a decade-long effort by the Chinese leadership to transform labour-intensive manufacturing and the export-led growth model into what official documents describe as a "new development pattern" - an economy driven by advanced technology and stronger domestic demand.

China has pursued this transition through long-term state-backed programmes such as Made in China 2025, launched in 2015. Despite progress, the transition has been uneven. Domestic economic pressures and external developments have complicated the shift in recent years. Policymakers nevertheless remain focused on long-term objectives, including the second centenary goal of "basically realising socialist modernisation by 2035". Another earlier target - eliminating extreme poverty - was declared achieved in 2020.

President Xi Jinping told delegates that China "needs to cope with a more complex environment and resolve more deep-seated contradictions". He was referring to economic pressures at home, intensifying geopolitical competition and vulnerabilities such as access to high-end technologies, particularly advanced semiconductor chips. The 140-page 15th Five-Year Plan builds on initiatives introduced during the past five years. Two programmes aimed at expanding technological applications - the Building Digital China initiative and the Artificial Intelligence+ plan - feature prominently in the draft outline. These initiatives were launched in 2023 and 2025, respectively. Similarly, the K2 visa programme, introduced in October 2025 to attract STEM talent, highlights Beijing's emphasis on integrating talent development with technological innovation.

Over the past decade, and particularly amid growing competition with the US over advanced technologies and trade disputes, technological self-reliance has become a central pillar of China's economic strategy. Policymakers have invested heavily in core technologies to ensure that the country does not face the problem of "not being able to obtain, buy, or beg for them". Although achieving self-sufficiency in semiconductor manufacturing equipment remains a major challenge, reiterating the sector's importance signals that the state will continue directing significant financial resources towards it. This ambition aligns with the broader objective of "building an independent, complete, open and efficient national innovation system". Achieving this goal depends on leadership in advanced technologies as well as policies aimed at boosting domestic demand.

The 15th Five-Year Plan has been unveiled at a politically significant moment in China's recent history and within a complex geopolitical environment. The process of selecting delegates to the 21st Party Congress has already begun at the local level and will culminate in October 2027 with the selection of a new leadership lineup. For Xi, the next two years are politically crucial as he seeks to ensure that the next generation of leadership carries his political imprint.

Meanwhile, China's economy faces several structural challenges, including mounting local government debt, sluggish domestic demand and trade pressures. These domestic difficulties are compounded by regional conflicts, technological and trade competition with the US and increasing pushback from other countries over trade imbalances. Reflecting Xi's message delivered to the party-state leadership at the Fourth Plenum in October 2025, Premier Li Qiang and other officials during the two sessions reiterated that "we must concentrate our efforts on managing our own affairs well," underlining the focus on domestic priorities.

A key takeaway from the two sessions is that while China's leadership remains committed to technological self-reliance and the structural transformation of its economy, it is adopting a cautious and inward-looking policy stance in the near term. This caution reflects the seriousness of China's current economic challenges and the difficulty of implementing the leadership's long-term vision. In the meantime, Chinese leaders are likely to seek relative stability in relations with major global actors such as the US and the EU. US President Donald Trump's planned visit to China in late March could help stabilise ties at least in the short term.

While China's long-term foreign policy objectives remain unchanged, Beijing may moderate its global posture to create space to deal with economic challenges and their political consequences at home.

(Devendra Kumar is an associate fellow at the Centre of Excellence for Himalayan Studies, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence, Delhi-NCR.)

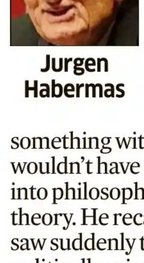
WORLD AT A GLANCE

Belarusian protest leader Maria Kolesnikova (right) receives the 2022 International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen in Germany on Saturday. The award was presented belatedly due to her imprisonment in Belarus. She was released on December 13, 2025. AFP

Influential German philosopher Jurgen Habermas dies at 96

▸ Jurgen Habermas, whose work on communication, rationality and sociology made him one of the world's most influential philosophers and a key intellectual figure in his native Germany, has died, at the age of 96, AP/PTI reports from Berlin.

Habermas' publisher, Suhrkamp, said he died on Saturday in Starnberg, near Munich. Habermas frequently weighed in on political matters over several decades. His extensive writing crossed the boundaries of academic and philosophical disciplines, providing a vision of modern society and social interaction. His best-known works included the two-volume "Theory of Communicative Action". Habermas, who was 15 at the time of Nazi Germany's defeat, later recalled the dawn of a new era in 1945 and his coming to terms with the reality of Nazi crimes as something without which he wouldn't have found his way into philosophy and social theory. He recalled that "you saw suddenly that it was a politically criminal system in which you had lived". He had an ambivalent relationship with the left-wing student movement of the late 1960s in Germany and beyond.



Jurgen Habermas

Islamabad airport to suspend flights

▸ Flight operations at Islamabad International Airport will remain suspended for two hours on March 16, Pakistani authorities said on Saturday, PTI reports from Islamabad.

In a social media post, the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) advised passengers to check with their airlines for any updates. "Due to operational reasons, flight operations at Islamabad International Airport will remain temporarily suspended on 16 March 2026 from 08:30 am to 10:30 am PKT," it said. In a notice to airmen, the PAA specified segments of air traffic service routes within the Lahore flight information region that would not be available from ground to flight level 210 due to "operational reasons". No reason was given for the closure of the airspace.

Hamas urges Iran not to attack neighbours

US now begging world, including India, to buy Russian oil: Iranian minister

GAZA CITY/DUBAI, AFP/PTI

An Iranian man goes into his house which was destroyed by a US-Israeli strike in Tehran on Saturday. REUTERS

Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas called on Iran on Saturday to refrain from targeting neighbouring countries, while affirming Tehran's right to defend itself against Israel and the United States. In a rare appeal, Hamas also urged the international community to take steps to end the war that has gripped West Asia since it began on February 28.

"While affirming the right of the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to this aggression by all available means in accordance with international norms and laws, the movement calls on the brothers in Iran to avoid targeting neighbouring countries," Hamas said in a statement, its first such public appeal to Tehran.

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said the US, despite "bullying India" to end Russian oil imports, is now begging the world to buy crude from Moscow two weeks after its war with Iran."The US spent months bullying India into ending oil imports from Russia," Araghchi said on Friday in a post on the social media platform X.

"After two weeks of war with Iran, the White House is now begging the world — including India — to buy Russian crude," he added.

Trump rejects efforts to launch Iran ceasefire talks

US P resident Donald Trump has rebuffed efforts by West Asian allies to start talks aimed at ending the Iran war, according to three sources, Reuters reports. Iran, for its part, has rejected the possibility of any ceasefire until US and Israeli strikes end, two senior Iranian sources told Reuters, adding that several countries had been trying to mediate an end to the conflict. The lack of interest from Washington and Tehran suggests both sides are digging in for an extended conflict.

Cuban protesters attack Communist party office

HAVANA, REUTERS

Anti-government protesters attacked a Communist Party office in central Cuba early on Saturday, a state-run newspaper reported, in a rare outburst of public dissent triggered by blackouts exacerbated by a US oil blockade.

A rally against power cuts and food shortages appeared to begin peacefully in the city of Moron late on Friday, but turned violent in the early hours of Saturday morning, the Invasor newspaper said.

Videos on social media showed a large fire and people throwing rocks through the windows of a building as voices shouted "liberty" in the background.

Reuters was able to verify the location of one video in Moron, which is on Cuba's northern coast about 250 miles (400 km) east of the capital Havana near the tourist resort of Cayo Coco. Checks showed it was recent but could not pinpoint the exact date.

The United States has tightened the screws on Cuba since capturing Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro – Cuba's most important foreign benefactor – in January.

US President Donald Trump cut off Venezuelan oil shipments to Cuba and threatened to slap tariffs on any country that sells oil to Cuba, piling pressure on an economy already struggling with shortages of food, fuel, electricity and medicine.

Trump has in recent weeks made a series of statements saying Cuba was on the verge of collapse or eager to make a deal with the United States. Cuba's government said on Friday it had begun talks with Washington to try to defuse the crisis.

Public protests, particularly violent ones, are exceedingly rare in Cuba. Its 2019 constitution grants citizens the right to demonstrate, but a law more specifically defining that right is stalled in the legislature, leaving those who take to the streets in legal limbo. "What initially began peacefully, and after an exchange with local authorities, turned into acts of vandalism against the headquarters of the Municipal Party Committee," the Invasor newspaper said.

"A smaller group of people stoned the entrance of the building and started a fire in the street with furniture from the reception area," it added.

Trump seeks to close $1.6 trillion revenue gap with raft of new tariffs

WASHINGTON, AP/PTI: The Trump administration this week stepped up its ambitious effort to replace about USD 1.6 trillion in lost tariff revenue that was eliminated by the Supreme Court's decision to strike down a range of the president's import taxes.

Recovering that lost revenue, which the White House was counting on to help offset the steep, multi-trillion-dollar cost of its tax cuts, is possible but will be challenging, experts say. The administration has to use different legal provisions to impose new duties, and those provisions require longer, complex processes that US companies can use to seek exemptions. It could be months or more before it is clear how much revenue the replacement tariffs will yield.

"I wouldn't bet against this administration being able to get back on paper the same effective tariff rate they had before," said Elena Patel, co-director of the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center. But the new approach will "make it easier for people to contest the tariffs, which is going to put a big asterisk on the revenue until all that is settled."

The US flag is raised at the US Embassy in Caracas on Saturday for the first time since 2019 after diplomatic ties were restored following the capture of Venezuela's former leader Nicolas Maduro in a US military raid. AFP

N Korea fires 10 ballistic missiles

▸ North Korea on Saturday fired about 10 ballistic missiles toward the eastern sea, South Korea's military said, staging its own show of force as the rival South conducts a joint military exercise with the United States, AP/PTI reports from Seoul.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the missiles were fired from an area near the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, but didn't immediately say how far they flew. Japan's Defense Ministry said the weapons landed in waters outside the country's exclusive economic zone.

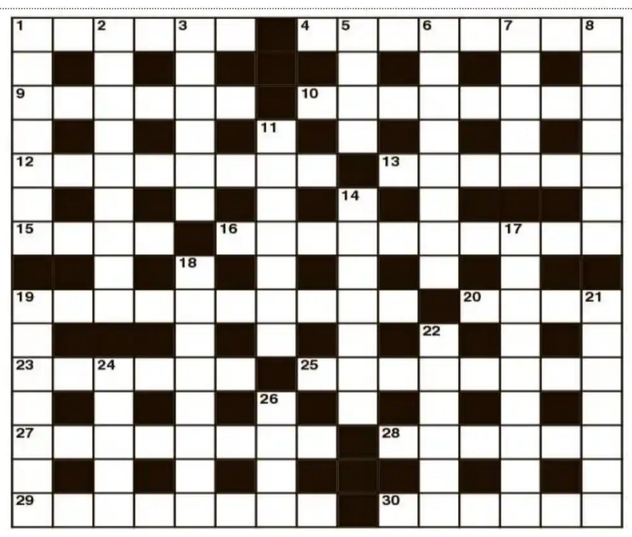
The launches came as the US and South Korean militaries conduct their annual springtime exercises involving thousands of troops while the Trump administration also wages an escalating war in West Asia.

Thailand's Death Fest invites visitors

▸ Thailand's "Death Fest" invites people to confront mortality while also offering practical services and spiritual advice for the inevitable, AP/PTI reports from Nonthaburi.

The unusual fair, now in its second year, has broached the subject that's uncomfortable for many. One popular exhibit is called "Test Die." Visitors can lie inside coffins of different sizes and styles while looking at themselves in a mirror suspended above. The experience is designed to prompt reflection rather than fear.

◆ SUNDAY CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 2671 ◆



ACROSS

1 Ring of troops or police (6)
4 Party's declared policy (8)
9 Stir emotionally (6)
10 Utterly perplexed (3,2,3)
12 Heavy dark timber used in furniture (8)
13 Charge for hiring (6)
15 Game played on horseback (4)
16 Real business (5,5)
19 Very uncomfortable situation (3,2,5)
20 Affectionate (4)
23 Taking sharp alternate turns (6)
25 So to speak (2,2,4)
27 Intended as a cure (8)
28 Short fast race (6)
29 Involve in difficulties (8)
30 Kind of summerhouse (6)

DOWN

1 Take heart (5,2)
2 Unwavering (4-5)
3 Capital of Canada (6)
5 Interval of calm (4)
6 Parody (8)
7 Beginning (5)
8 Acute viral disease with spots (7)
11 Diary (7)
14 Serving no purpose (7)
17 Suspension of hostilities (5-4)
18 Intermittently (3,3,2)
19 Grotesque (7)
21 Distinguished conductor (7)
22 Imagined state of perfection (6)
24 Whole range (5)
26 Amount of fish netted (4)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 4031

CRYPTIC

ACROSS: 9, Ine-last-I-c 10, Haunting 12, Trip 13, Career 14, Leave be(er) 15, R-ear l-ight 17, Concerned 18, Puts out 20, Acti-O-n 21, O-P-en 24, Makes for 26, Retailer 28, Even 29, Glared 31, Re-pine-d 34, Op-pressed 36, Sevent-een 38, Cheetah (cheater) 39, Enti-re 40, T-ro(und) -T 41, Pedigree 42, Running to.
DOWN: 1, Gift wrap 2, Sel-I-na 3, Straight 4, A-c-cent 5, Short cut 6, Pulling out 7, St-R-ayed 8, Un-see-n 11, T-ending 16, L-ooted 19, Trace 20, Air 22, Preen 23, Pip-pin 25, Fall's short 26, Re-d 27, Retouch 30, Re-deemed 31, Rever-ing 32, Do-nation 33, Certain 35, Peeped 36, Sat-I-re 37, (sp)E-nrag-e(ch).

EASY

ACROSS: 9, Tangerine 10, Obedient 12, Moat 13, Struck 14, Pyramid 15, Emergency 17, Adrenalin 18, Edifice 20, Tremor 21, Miss 24, Alphabet 26, Tendency 28, Turk 29, Acetic 31, Tantrum 34, Passenger 36, Beefeater 38, Earldom 39, Ocelot 40, Slug 41, Infamous 42, Toadstool.
DOWN: 1, Stampede 2, Engage 3, Distance 4, Beauty 5, Bookcase 6, Peppercorn 7, Vibrant 8, Enamel 11, Oddness 16, Geisha 19, Idler 20, Tat 22, Incur 23, Seance 25, Backgammon 26, Tic 27, Stopper 30, Tortoise 31, Teetotal 32, Marigold 33, Deadpan 35, Strong 36, Breath 37, Tallow.

SU DO KU X - 3856

							6	
		8					1	
4	2	1						
2	4							
								4
9						6	8	1
	3					7		9
	5				1			
							2	3

SOLUTION TO 3855

6	5	8	9	1	4	3	7	2
4	9	7	3	5	2	8	6	1
3	1	2	8	6	7	9	4	5
7	3	4	1	2	5	6	8	9
8	2	1	6	7	9	5	3	4
5	6	9	4	8	3	1	2	7
2	7	3	5	9	8	4	1	6
9	8	6	7	4	1	2	5	3
1	4	5	2	3	6	7	9	8

To solve the puzzle:
The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

DH Archives/ Srikanta Sharma R

THE EDEN MIRACLE

India's victory in the second Test of the 2001 Border–Gavaskar series at Eden Gardens, 25 years to the day, is one of cricket's greatest comebacks. Australia arrived with a record 16-Test winning streak and had already beaten India in Mumbai, leaving the hosts on the brink of series loss. When Australia scored 445 and bowled India out for 171, enforcing the follow-on, defeat seemed inevitable. The turnaround began with VVS Laxman, promoted to No. 3, who produced a magnificent 281, filled with elegant strokeplay. Rahul Dravid provided the perfect support, displaying immense resolve for his 180. They shared a monumental 376-run stand and completely tilted the balance. India declared at 657/7, setting Australia a daunting target. Under pressure, Australia caved in against Harbhajan Singh. The off-spinner, who had already taken a historic hat-trick in the first innings, finished with 6/73 in the second for a 13-wicket haul. Australia, dismissed for 212, handed India a stunning 171-run victory. The Indians then won the final Test in Chennai to clinch the series. Two of the main architects of the epic win in Kolkata — Laxman and Dravid — spoke to **Madhu Jawali,** recalling the seminal moment in Indian cricket.

Harbhajan's hat-trick halts Aussies

A triumph for deceptive play, says Prakash

Red hot India snap Aussie streak

Pakistan outplay Ireland

Randhawa, Bhandari in fine form

Laxman, Dravid smash Aussies to smithereens

BRIEF SCORES

Australia: 445 all out in 131.5 overs (Michael Slater 42, Matthew Hayden 97, Justin Langer 58, Steve Waugh 110, Jason Gillespie 46; Zaheer Khan 2-89, Sourav Ganguly 1-44, Harbhajan Singh 7-123) & **212 all out in 68.3 overs** (Hayden 67, Slater 43, Langer 28; Harbhajan 6-73, Sachin Tendulkar 3-31)

It to India: 171 all out in 58.1 overs (Rahul Dravid 25, VVS laxman 59; Glenn McGrath 4-18, Jason Gillespie 2-47, Michael Kasprowicz 2-39, Shane Warne 2-65) **(following on) 657/7d in 178 overs** (Shiv Sundar Das 39, Sadgopan Ramesh 30, Laxman 281, Sourav Ganguly 48, Dravid 180; McGrath 3-103, Gillespie 2-115) **by 171 runs.**

Player of the Match: **VVS Laxman**

'Kolkata win gave stability, continuity to the team'

Rahul Dravid, by his own admission, was under a bit of pressure following a couple of low scores. Pushed to No. 6, from his customary No. 3, the right-hander produced an innings for the ages. Battling cramps, he raised an epic stand with Laxman that is now part of cricketing folklore.

Rahul, one of India's greatest Test wins, and you being one of the main architects of that win. How do you look back at it after 25 years?
It's been a long time. Of course, it's a really nice memory of your career and, obviously, it's nice that, in many ways, a lot of people who witnessed it or were following it remember it only because of the nature of the Test match, right? I mean, we came from behind against Australia, and from that perspective it's really nice to know that it's kind of part of people's memory and that it was an important win.

What was the mindset of the team? India were coming off a loss in Mumbai and here they were forced to follow-on, then lost four quick wickets in the second innings. What happened after that was magical.
Obviously, we were under a lot of pressure. You're playing an Australian team that has won 16 Tests in a row. They beat us in Mumbai. There was a lot of talk about the series, about how it was a final frontier for Australia. There was a lot of hype around it. They had outplayed us in Mumbai, and also for the first three days of that game in Kolkata. We weren't able to compete. So there was a certain amount of pressure and I think, in some ways, being so far behind in the game also helped because we were able to just focus on playing and not think too far ahead. And then I think once we got a partnership going, both of us could sort of feel that the pressure was on them.

Personally also, you had two-three low scores. Talk us through your mindset when you were asked to bat at No. 6. What was playing at the back of your mind and what clicked for you on that day?
I just think that my form coming into that particular innings was a little bit patchy. I had scored runs in the series before and even in domestic cricket. So, I was in good form, but for two or three innings I didn't really score as much as I would have liked. And a kind of pressure was building up. Then, of course, being asked to bat at six, I want to say I was fine with that. That was trying to put the pressure back on them because, no doubt, Laxman was batting really well at that point of time. So, the feeling was to allow him to continue to bat since he had batted really well in the first innings and let him go and put the pressure on them. And it worked. In some ways it gave me some time to go back and sit and reflect, sit outside and watch the game. And then I was able to come there and put that partnership together.

That is why that animated reaction after the century?
Honestly, it had nothing to do with anything. It's just that, in some ways, I felt that the team was being put under a lot of pressure going into that game. And I think, in a lot of ways, everyone expected us to lose. So they were putting the team under quite a lot of pressure. For me, it was just, in some ways, a release of that kind of pressure.

> Laxman was a really good player to bat with. I played junior cricket with him and we played a lot of cricket for South Zone. Also, I just enjoyed watching him bat.
>
> **RAHUL DRAVID**

You have shared many partnerships with him both for South Zone and India, but how was it to watch him from the other end that day?
Laxman was a really good player to bat with. Personally, I got along well with him. I played junior cricket with him and we played a lot of cricket for South Zone. We had already shared some big partnerships together in domestic cricket. So we knew each other really well and I think we got along quite well. Also, I just enjoyed watching him bat. I think he was a really fine player and a really good player of all kinds of bowling. He used to play all around the wicket and had a very calm personality as well. He didn't get frazzled by too many things.

Laxman was battling back issues, you were coming off a fever, and then to play like that in searing conditions... How does the threshold to bear physical pain go up?
To be honest, I kind of got used to playing long innings because I was always someone who loved batting and loved the contest. Loved competing. So I kind of got used to playing long innings and I loved batting. For me, the mental side of it, to be honest, was not that difficult because I had good routines. I knew how to construct long innings. For me, the physicality of that day was a bit difficult because I was coming into that Test having a fever and had not actually practised at all in the lead-up to that particular game. I also used to sweat a lot, and they were very hot days as well.

You lose a lot of fluid and you're cramping. In fact, at the end of the evening I needed drips to recover. But when you're in that kind of position you're pushing yourself because you see that you're playing for your country, you're playing for your team, you're in the middle of a really good partnership.

This victory and the series win, coming soon after what was a very difficult time for Indian cricket, what did it mean to the team, the players of that era? How important was it at that point in time?
I think it firstly gave a lot of confidence to the team and belief that we could beat a team like Australia. It gave us a lot of belief in the quality we had. Also, in some ways, it allowed the team to settle down a little bit over the next few years and build on this success. I think there was a bit of stability and continuity over the next few years, with John Wright being able to continue as coach and Sourav as captain. And we were able to then have some success overseas and build on it and grow from this series.

'We learned a lot of life lessons from that match'

Battling severe back spasms, which needed physio's assistance at every possible break to mobilise the back, VVS Laxman produced the most special knock of his innings against Australia that not only triggered a massive turnaround of India's fortunes in the Test, but Indian cricket as well. A quarter of century later, Laxman, in a freewheeling chat with DHoS, recalls how the mental pressure and physical pain turned into unbridled joy.

Laxman, after 25 years, how do you look back at that innings and game?
It definitely feels very satisfying and fulfilling. Whenever you look back at the Test match and the Test series, you are part of something special in the history of Indian cricket. And more than scoring 281, I think the way as a team, we showed that mental resilience and the fortitude to accept the situation we were in and with a positive mindset to play for the national team and then bounce back to win the game and eventually the series... So, in fact, a lot of life lessons is something which we learned from that Test match and that series and which we tried to practice and exhibit throughout our career and even now.

What was the atmosphere in the dressing room when India were asked to follow-on?
I still remember because I was the last batsman to get out. I walked into the change room and then there was a pat on my shoulder. That was John Wright. He asked me not to remove my pads. I was surprised. And I asked him why. And he told me I will be batting at No. 3. I was obviously very happy that I was getting to bat in a position where I was always comfortable. But the atmosphere in the changing room, obviously, there was a lot of disappointment because we knew that we were a much better batting side than what we displayed as a unit in the first innings because that was not the ideal score for us to be bowled out. But when we were in that situation, what we all discussed was one thing which is in our control is to keep fighting.

In your book you say you were happy to know you would be batting at No. 3 in the second innings, but what was it like replacing Rahul?
See, in that situation, we were obviously not thinking too much about what as individuals we had to be. It was more about doing something special for your team and country. And I think both me, Rahul and all of us in the Indian team always were those who never ever cared too much about what role we were given. But whichever role has been given to us we wanted to fulfil that to the best of our ability. And then there was that mutual respect because all those decisions, whether you liked it or not, you knew that they were taken in the best interest of the team. So, at that particular moment, yeah, I was definitely happy that I was getting to bat in No. 3 because that position was something which I was very familiar with and I enjoyed batting in that position. But never was there a conversation between me or Rahul about the swap.

> Batting with Rahul was always fun because we all know the kind of focus, concentration and the application which Rahul showed was always exemplary.
>
> **VVS LAXMAN**

And how surreal was it to forge that partnership with Rahul himself?
It's strange because whenever we were playing for South Zone, I used to bat at three and Rahul four. And we had, in fact, one month before the Test match, we had a 300-run partnership against West Zone in the Duleep Trophy in Surat where I got a double hundred and Rahul got a big hundred. So, batting with Rahul was always fun because we all know the kind of focus, concentration and the application which Rahul showed was always exemplary. But the good thing was we never ever tried to influence each other's game because we just went about playing our natural game. And one thing which was in our mind, especially at the start of the fourth day was both of us sort of challenged ourselves saying that can we bat the whole of the fourth day? So, that was the only goal and objective we had when we were walking out to bat on the fourth day morning.

You had back spasms. What was the kind of pain you were gong through during that time?
In fact, it was three days before the Test match when I was having "nets' when I suffered back spasms. And for the first time I experienced something known as 'list' wherein the entire spine and my back was tilted towards the left side. So, I still remember after the practice session, walking into our physio's (Andrew Leipus) room. And I know I told Andrew, 'my back is stiff, but I'm sure that it should be okay for the Test match.' And he asked me to remove my T-shirt and watch myself in the mirror. And I was shocked when I saw that my entire back was tilted towards the left side. In fact, I actually broke down. And I was in tears because that was an important series for me. But credit to Andrew he worked on it, he mobilised my back, he gave me pain killers. And even though I was 50 to 60 percent fit, Sourav (Ganguly) and John trusted me and they wanted me to play the Test match which itself was a huge confidence booster. And then, we fielded. And whenever there was a break, I used to come back, and Andrew used to mobilise my back.

How did this innings impact you personally because after that for the next five-six years you were unstoppable?
I think two innings made a lasting impression on my game. The first one was obviously the 167 (in Sydney in 1999) because that was my first Test hundred against a good Austrian bowling in tough conditions. So, that gave me the confidence that I belong to international cricket. And then this innings and the Test gave me and the team the strength and the fortitude to bounce back from however tough a situation we are in. So, there have been moments where we were in a similar kinds of situation and we were able to fight and bounce back.

Kishan R (left) and Preemal J pose with their spoils.

Kishan, Preemal crowned champions

BENGALURU, DHNS: Former national champion Kishan R of Karnataka clinched his second National Title in the Men's Division at the ARC 34th National Tenpin Bowling Championships here.

In the women's division, Karnataka's Preemal J captured her maiden national title, ending a 15-year wait for Karnataka in this division.

In the championship match played on basis of cumulative pinfall of two games, top seeded Kishan produced a composed performance to gain a lead of 17 pins in the game 1 (208 –191).

He extended his lead in the 2nd game, scoring high game of 244 to Akaash's 238, sealing the Title with an overall margin of 23 pins (452- 429).

Earlier in the day, in the match 1 of the Men's division stepladder round, 3rd seed Akaash Ashok Kumar (358) defeated 4th seed Shanmugananda (308) by 50 pins.

Akaash then continued his strong form in the next match, scoring 476 to overcome 2nd seed Dhruv Sarda (374) by 102 pins and advance to the final. In the Championship match, 4th seeded Preemal took an early lead of 20 pins in the 1st game with 188 against top seed Sabina Athica (168).

Tharun's loss ends Indian campaign

BASEL, PTI: India's Tharun Mannepalli put up a gallant fight before going down to Indonesia's Anthony Sinisuka Ginting in a thrilling three-game quarterfinal at the Swiss Open Super 300 badminton tournament here.

The world No. 43 Indian lost 19-21, 21-19, 13-21 to Ginting, who is returning from injuries that marred his 2025 season, including a significant back problem.

The defeat also brought the curtains down on India's campaign at the USD 250,000 tournament.

Ginting opened up a 6-2 lead early and though Mannepalli clawed back to level at 11-11, the Indonesian pulled away to 16-12 before earning four game points.

The Indian saved three before conceding the opening game. In the second game, Mannepalli broke away from 6-6 to surge to 11-7 and then 19-13. Ginting suddenly came alive, reeling off six points to draw level at 19-19, but the Indian held his nerve to take the match into the decider and win it.

BCCI to felicitate five triumphant Indian teams

Mithali Raj to receive BCCI Lifetime Achievement Award for women

MUMBAI, PTI

The Suryakumar Yadav-led Indian team, which scripted history by winning the T20 World Cup, will be felicitated by the BCCI during its annual 'Naman Awards' ceremony here on Sunday.

The highlight of the BCCI Naman Awards 2026 will be the felicitation of all five Indian teams that have captured ICC titles recently, a historic first, the Indian cricket board announced on Saturday.

The Gautam Gambhir-coached side defeated New Zealand by 96 runs in the final in Ahmedabad on March 8 to become the first team to win the T20 World Cup three times, the first to successfully defend the title and the first to achieve the feat on home soil.

The ceremony will also honour the other Indian sides who lifted ICC trophies in the recent past, including the senior women's team that won the ODI World Cup 2025, the men's team that clinched the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, the Under-19 Cricket World Cup 2026 and the women's U-19 T20 World Cup team of 2025.

Rahul Dravid (left) and Roger Binny will be conferred with the Col CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award by the BCCI on Sunday. DH FILE PHOTOS

Meanwhile, the BCCI also officially confirmed several individual honours that were already known earlier this week.

India's Test and ODI captain Shubman Gill will receive the Polly Umrigar Award for Best International Cricketer (Men) for the 2024-25 season, while Smriti Mandhana will be honoured as the Best International Cricketer (Women) for the fifth time in her career.

Stalwarts Roger Binny and Rahul Dravid will be conferred the Col CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award, the board's highest honour, while former India captain Mithali Raj will receive the BCCI Lifetime Achievement Award for Women.

Binny, a member of India's 1983 Cricket World Cup-winning team and the tournament's highest wicket-taker, later served the game as coach, selector and BCCI president from 2022 to 2025.

Dravid, one of India's greatest batters with over 24,000 international runs, also played a key role in shaping the country's next generation of cricketers and was the head coach when India won the T20 World Cup in the previous edition in 2024.

Among other awardees, Ira Jadhav will receive the Jagmohan Dalmiya Trophy for Best Woman Cricketer (Domestic), while Shafali Verma will be honoured as the Best Woman Cricketer in the Senior Domestic One-Day format.

Ayush Mhatre will receive the Lala Amarnath Award for Best All-Rounder in domestic limited-overs competitions, while Vidarbha's Harsh Dubey will get the award for Best All-Rounder in the Ranji Trophy.

The Mumbai Cricket Association will also be recognised as the best performing state association in BCCI domestic tournaments after winning four titles and finishing runners-up in two competitions during the season.

India U-17 women secure comeback victory

YANGON, PTI: Pamela Conti's substitutes played a decisive role as the Indian U-17 women's football team staged a dramatic late comeback to defeat Myanmar 3-2 in the second of two international friendlies at the Thuwunna Stadium here on Saturday.

The hosts led at the end of the first half through Hnin Wint War Kyaw (12th) and Min Htone May Zitar (45th), who netted on either side of Alva Devi Senjam's (33th) equaliser.

Deep in the second half, India's substitutes Anushka Kumari (88th) and Joya (90+1th) completed the comeback win.

The match was part of India's preparations for the upcoming AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup, scheduled to be held in Suzhou, China, from May 1 to May 17.

Myanmar, who have also qualified for the continental tournament, are using the fixtures as part of their preparations. India had earlier won the first friendly 2-0 on Thursday.

Myanmar started brightly and put India under early pressure, creating a couple of chances within the opening 10 minutes.

Their first opportunity came when forward Shin Thant Phyu Sin Pyone pressed Indian goalkeeper Munni into making an errant pass that fell straight to Saung Thazin Oo.

However, with the goal gaping, she failed to keep her effort on target. Moments later, Myanmar threatened again from a set-piece.

FORMULA ONE CHINESE GP

Prodigious teenager Antonelli creates history

Italian becomes youngest driver to take pole; Russell to start second

SHANGHAI, AFP

The 19-year-old Italian Kimi Antonelli took pole position for the Chinese Grand Prix on Saturday, becoming the youngest driver to achieve the feat in Formula One history.

Antonelli led a Mercedes front-row lockout along with George Russell and erased the record of Sebastian Vettel, who was 21 when he took pole for the Italian Grand Prix in 2008.

Mercedes' Italian driver Kimi Antonelli (right) celebrates with his father Marco Antonelli after clinching pole position at the Chinese Grand Prix in Shanghai on Saturday. AFP

The Mercedes duo, as in Australia last weekend, have been dominant in Shanghai.

Antonelli blasted round in 1min 32.064sec on his final qualifying lap, 0.222sec ahead of championship leader Russell, who had won the sprint race earlier in the day.

"It was a pretty clean session," said Antonelli. "No mistakes and looking forward to the race tomorrow."

The Ferrari pair of Lewis Hamilton and Charles Leclerc will fill the second row of the grid for Sunday's race after qualifying third and fourth.

Then, on a two-by-two grid, came the McLarens of Oscar Piastri and world champion Lando Norris.

Max Verstappen was only eighth fastest, continuing a very unhappy weekend in a clearly struggling Red Bull.

Pierre Gasly was seventh in the Alpine with the second Red Bull of Isack Hadjar ninth and Oliver Bearman's Haas rounding out the top 10.

Russell had got stuck in gear on his opening out lap in Q3 and had to return to the pits.

After the problem had been fixed it left him time for just one flying lap and he was unable to eclipse his teammate.

"Really happy for George who had an issue there," said Antonelli of his teammate.

Russell said he was relieved to have set a lap time right at the end of the session.

"Definitely damage limitation," said Russell.

"In Q2 the front wing broke, and then in Q3 I stopped out on track and then couldn't change gear," he said.

"On the last lap I had no battery, no tyre temp or anything. The team did a really good job. Just really happy to be standing here. It could've been much worse."

Ferrari have been quick out of the blocks at the start of races so far and Hamilton said he would be eyeing up the two Mercedes in front of him on Sunday.

Bahrain, Saudi races likely 'cancelled or postponed'

Formula One races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia will be cancelled or rescheduled as the Middle East war engulfs the region, a source with knowledge of the matter told AFP on Friday, reports AFP from Riyadh.

"The F1 in Saudi and Bahrain won't happen at their scheduled time," the source said, requesting anonymity to discuss a sensitive topic.

Formula One will announce soon that the races "have been cancelled or postponed to a later date", the source added. Bahrain is currently scheduled for April 10-12 and Saudi a week later. However, the Gulf has been battered by two weeks of Iranian drone and missile attacks.

Sabalenka, Rybakina renew rivalry in title clash

INDIAN WELLS, REUTERS

Aryna Sabalenka and Elena Rybakina moved into the Indian Wells final with straight-sets victories over Linda Noskova and Elina Svitolina on Friday, setting up a rematch of their Australian Open Grand Slam title clash.

World number one Sabalenka has been in formidable form this season, winning 16 of her first 17 matches, with her only defeat coming against Rybakina in the Melbourne showpiece in January.

She powered past Noskova 6-3, 6-4 and will compete for the Indian Wells crown for the third time in four years, seeking her maiden title in the Californian desert.

Twice Grand Slam champion Rybakina overcame a stiff test to see off Ukraine's Svitolina 7-5 6-4, staying on track to claim a second title in the event.

Sunday's title match will mark the third final between Rybakina and Sabalenka in the last six months. Kazakh Rybakina has won their previous two encounters, lifting the WTA Finals trophy in November and securing the Australian Open title.

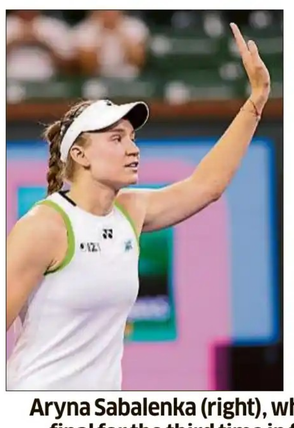
Sabalenka seized early control, breaking for a 3-1 lead after a Noskova forehand sailed long, and then the Czech's inconsistent serving - including a double fault - handed the Belarusian another break for 5-1.

Noskova briefly halted the momentum by breaking back when Sabalenka served for the set, only the second time that the top seed had dropped her serve during the tournament. Sabalenka quickly regrouped when she served again at 5-3, sealing the opener with an ace, while Noskova won just half of the points behind her own serve.

Bhambri loses

Indian doubles ace Yuki Bhambri and his Swedish partner Andre Goransson's impressive campaign came to an end after losing in the semifinals of the Indian Wells Masters.

The unseeded pair went down 5-7, 7-6 (7), 5-10 to France's Arthur Rinderknech and Monaco's Valentin Vacherot.



Aryna Sabalenka (right), who reached the Indian Wells final for the third time in four years, will face Elena Rybakina in the title clash in California on Sunday. AFP

Big Decision wins feature

DELHI RESULTS

Shakti Singh-trained Big Decision, ridden by Vishal, won the upper division of the Crown Sprint Plate, the feature event of the races on Saturday.

1. Imperial Plate - 1600M: Ashwa Frankie (Shekhawat) 1; Lucky Lips (Aasif Khan) 2; Master Tornado (Riazuddin) 3; Jet Space (Saurav Rawat) 4; Wb: 3-1/4, 5-1/2, 4L. T: 1: 41.62. TB: S. Nawab. Fav: Lucky Lips.

2. Ultimate Victory Plate - 1200M: Missey Boy (Aasif Khan) 1; Divit (Arjun) 2; Chieftain (Saurav Rawat) 3; Big Bang (Shivam) 4; Wb: 4, 10-1/4, 2-3/4L.T: 1:12.43. TB: SM Abbas. Fav: Missey Boy.

3. Elite Crown Plate - 1200M: Divine Right (Dhanu Deora) 1; Royal Baby (Ankit Pal) 2; Black Rainstorm (Vishal) 3; Cletus (S Qureshi) 4; Wb: 6-1/4, 1/2L, Nk. T: 1:12.05. TB: Ajay Sharma. Fav: Divine Right.

4. Platinum Plate - 1000M: Euphoria (Vishal) 1; Super Speed (Arjun) 2; Niche Currency (Lave Kumar) 3; Mighty (Dhanu Deora) 4; NR: Nizbati Malang. Wb: Shd, Nk, 5-3/4L. T: 1:00.45. TB: Rajinder. Fav: Euphoria.

5. Crown Sprint Plate (Div I) - 1000M: Big Decision (Vishal) 1; Eliminator (Lave Kumar) 2; Hukamori (Arjun) 3; Tomorrows Dreams (Angad) 4; Wb: Nk, 1-1/4, 2-1/2L. T: 58.94. TB: Shakti Singh. Fav: Real Stuff.

6. Crown Sprint Plate (Div II) - 1000M: Robust (Dhanu Deora) 1; First Class (Rakesh) 2; Rinku Romeo (Arjun) 3; Master Stoute (Angad) 4; Wb: 2-3/4, 2, 5L. T: 59.20. TB: Magan Singh. Fav: Robust.

Bengaluru dividends

I race: Rs 45w; 13, 10p; Fc: Rs 76; Q: Rs 26; Shp: Rs 30; Thp: Rs 28; Tri: Rs 125 & 114.

II race: Rs 17w; 10, 14p; Fc: Rs 27; Q: Rs 22; Shp: Rs 22; Thp: Rs 26; Tri: Rs 29 & 12; Ex: Rs 76 & 68.

III race: Rs 11w; 11, 13, 14p; Fc: Rs 36; Q: Rs 24; Shp: Rs 33; Thp: Rs 51; Tri: Rs 193 & 153; Ex: Rs 810 & 407.

IV race: Rs 23w; 11, 10, 16p; Fc: Rs 44; Q: Rs 34; Shp: Rs 35; Thp: Rs; 41; Tri: Rs 114 & 65; Ex: Rs 236 & 102.

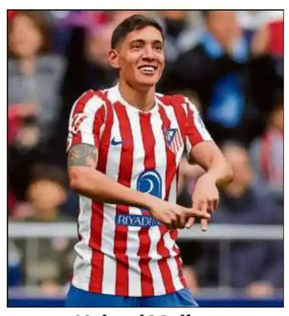
V race: Rs 93w; 16, 16, 20p; Fc: Rs 644; Q: Rs 351; Shp: Rs 29; Thp: Rs 53; Tri: Rs 4,026 & 1,725; Ex: Rs 15,946 & 13,668.

VI race: Rs 15w; 11, 16, 17p; Fc: Rs 122; Q: Rs 75; Shp: Rs 49; Thp: Rs 39; Tri: Rs 506 & 165; Ex: Rs 1,735 & 527.

Jackpot: Rs 1,343 (120). **Runner-up:** Rs 313 (237). **Treble:** Rs 428 (142).

Molina stunner seals derby win for Atletico over Getafe

MADRID, AFP: Atletico Madrid scraped a 1-0 win over Getafe in La Liga on Saturday, with the visitors reduced to 10 men when Abdel Abqar was sent off for touching Alexander Sorloth in a sensitive area.



Nahuel Molina

Nahuel Molina's thunderbolt from distance helped third-place Atletico cut the gap to the top two, but the bizarre incident early in the second half involving Getafe defender Abqar was the biggest talking point.

The Moroccan, who insisted he did not mean to touch the Atletico striker's crotch, appeared to pinch the Norwegian, who threw him to the floor angrily.

"It was not my intention to touch the player in this area," Abqar, who was dismissed after a VAR review, told Movistar.

"You see it in very game, and in football, we're touching, clashing and everything, but I never thought about touching him in that area...

"I don't know what the referee saw but you can see it clearly and I swear that I never thought about touching him there."

Abqar explained he was trying to touch Sorloth's stomach, "as you do sometimes to know where your opponent is".

Atletico coach Diego Simeone rotated his line-up ahead of Wednesday's Champions League last 16 second leg trip to Tottenham, but was still able to secure a sixth win in the last seven matches across all competitions.

The Rojiblancos, third, moved within six points of second-place Real Madrid, who host Elche later on. League leaders Barca, fourth points clear of Los Blancos, host Sevilla Sunday.

Defender Molina's superb strike, lashed into the top corner from over 25 yards out after eight minutes, was enough to split the teams at Atletico's Metropolitano stadium.

It was a more taxing clash than their rollicking 5-2 victory over Tottenham.

No player fined for T20 WC exit: PCB

LAHORE, PTI: The Pakistan Cricket Board on Saturday denied the imposition of fines on members of its T20 World Cup squad for not reaching the semifinals of the tournament.

Amir Mir, the PCB spokesperson, refuted the reports to that effect that appeared in a section of the media.

"No player has been fined but yes the board is thinking about working out a formula for players because they get lot of incentives when they perform well," Mir told reporters here.

Mir noted that each player now earns close to PKR 6-7 crores so the board is contemplating making them responsible for their performances.

"But nothing is final and no player has been fined," he added.

It has been reported that each Pakistan player were fined PKR five million after the team's exit from the ICC showpiece without reaching the last four stage.

Pakistan cricketers are given central contracts with monthly retainers besides the usual match and tour fees and bonuses for winning matches in different categories.

Brighton edge Sunderland, Bournemouth held

LONDON, AFP

Brighton beat Sunderland 1-0 to climb into the top half of the Premier League, while Burnley held Bournemouth before Arsenal and Manchester City reignite their battle for the title on Saturday.

The Gunners can open up a 10-point lead at the top of the table for a few hours at least when Everton visit the Emirates Stadium in a 1730 GMT kick-off.

City must bounce back from their Champions League trouncing by Real Madrid when they visit West Ham later in a match of significance at both ends of the table.

West Ham sit in the relegation zone but can leapfrog Nottingham Forest and Tottenham with victory over Pep Guardiola's men.

Sunderland were unbeaten in their first 11 home games back in the top flight but have now lost their last three at the Stadium of Light to slip to 12th.

Yankuba Minteh scored the only goal when his shot somehow squeezed past goalkeeper Melker Ellborg at his near post.

Brighton move above the Black Cats on goal difference and into 10th.

A 0-0 draw at Turf Moor did little for either side as Burnley slip closer to relegation and Bournemouth failed to move in on the European places.

The Clarets are eight points adrift of safety with eight games remaining.

Bournemouth remain in ninth, three points behind Brentford in what is likely to be the final European spot in seventh.

Results: Burnley: 0 drew with Bournemouth: 0; Sunderland: 0 lt to Brighton: 1 (Minteh 58th).

9-man Bayern draw

Leaders Bayern Munich held on for a 1-1 draw at Bayer Leverkusen despite finishing with nine men in an eventful Bundesliga clash on Saturday.

Second-placed Borussia Dortmund's comfortable home win at Augsburg drew them nine points behind reigning champions Bayern with eight games to play.

Aleix Garcia's goal gave Leverkusen the lead and Bayern striker Nicolas Jackson saw red before half-time.

Luis Diaz levelled things up but picked up a second yellow card for diving in the box.

Result: Leverkusen: 1 (Garcia 6th) drew with Bayern Munich: 1 (Diaz 69th).

Yankuba Minteh (left) celebrates after scoring Brighton & Hove Albion's winner against Sunderland on Saturday. REUTERS

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

1st Women's T20I: New Zealand vs South Africa (**7:15 am**). **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network.**

1st T20I: New Zealand vs South Africa (**11:45 am**). **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network.**

3rd ODI: Bangladesh vs Pakistan (**1:45 pm**). **LIVE** on **FanCode.**

FOOTBALL

EPL: Crystal Palace vs Leeds, Manchester United vs Aston Villa, Nottm Forest vs Fulham (**all 7:30 pm**), Liverpool vs Tottenham (**10:00 pm**). **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar.**

ISL: NorthEast United FC vs Jamshedpur FC (**5:00 pm**), Inter Kashi FC vs Mumbai City FC (**7:30 pm**). **LIVE** on **FanCode.**

BADMINTON

Swiss Open: Final (**3:30 pm**). **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar.**

MOTORSPORT

Formula 1: Chinese GP main race (**12:30 pm**). **LIVE** on **FanCode.**

GOLF

The Players Championship: Day 4 (**5:00 pm**). **LIVE** on **FanCode.**

Sovereign King for main race

MUMBAI SELECTIONS

Adhirajsingh Jodha-trained Sovereign King, to be ridden by Antony Raj, is fancied to win the CN Wadia Gold Cup, the feature event to be run over a distance of mile and a half at the races on Sunday. The first race starts at 4 pm.

1. Haunting Memories Million - 1600M: Zacharias 1, Namiri 2, Break Point 3.

2. Open Spaces Million - 1200M: Santana Row 1, Jackson 2, Ashwa Ankara 3.

3. Shapoorji Pallonji Breeders' Juvenile Colts Championship - 1600M: Alexios 1, Puccini 2, Lion Heart 3.

4. Forbes Breeders' Juvenile Fillies Championship - 1600M: Angelisa 1, Pinnacle 2, Vortex 3.

5. Maharaja Sir Harisinghji Trophy - 1600M: African Gold 1, Psychic Star 2, Zuccaro 3.

6. CN Wadia Gold Cup - 2400M: Sovereign King 1, Thalassa 2. King Ke 3.

7. Lahinch Million - 1400M: Neutralist 1, Charisse 2, Starseed 3.

8. Poonwalla Stud Farm Auction Sales stakes - 1400M: Invictor 1, Gunfire 2, Queen Of Beauties 3.

9. Zavaray S Poonawalla Sprinters' Challenge - 1200M: Western Star 1, Dream Seller 2, Shambala 3.

10. Ahead Of My Time Million - 1200M: Challenge Accepted 1, El Moran 2, Skandha 3.

Day's best: Angelisa. **I jackpot:** 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. **II jackpot:** 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. **I treble:** 4, 5, 6. **II treble:** 7, 8, 9. **III treble:** 8, 9, 10.

Saina Nehwal

Saina asks BWF to be cautious about proposed scoring changes

NEW DELHI, PTI: Olympic medallist Saina Nehwal has urged the Badminton World Federation (BWF) to exercise caution regarding proposed scoring changes, maintaining that the current 21-point system preserves the sport's essential intensity and endurance.

The game's governing body (BWF) has proposed switching to a 3x15 scoring format from the current 3x21 system, with a membership vote on the change scheduled at the BWF Annual General Meeting in Horsens, Denmark on April 25.

"Badminton has a rich tradition, and tournaments like the All England Open Badminton Championships and the BWF World Championships have always been special because of their intensity and endurance factor," Saina, who joined the advisory board of India's International Movement to Unite Nations (IIMUN), told PTI in an interview.

"Any change in scoring or format should be carefully considered. The current 21-point system has worked well and players have adapted to it over many years.

"If changes are introduced, they should ensure that the quality of rallies and the competitive balance of the sport are not affected. At the end of the day, the focus should remain on fair competition and the spirit of the game."

According to the revamped BWF World Tour, the five Super 1000 tournaments, to be staged across Asia and Europe, will introduce a new format in singles, with 48 players competing in a group stage followed by knockouts.

Doubles events will feature 32-pair knockout draws, and each Super 1000 tournament will run for 11 days across two weekends.

HOCKEY WC QUALIFIERS

Dogged England sink India

Grace, Elizabeth the difference makers in visitors' 2-0 final victory

HYDERABAD, PTI

The Indian women's hockey team lost 0-2 against the higher-ranked England to finish runners-up in the FIH Hockey World Cup Qualifiers but still managed to qualify for this year's mega-event, here on Saturday.

World No. 6 England scored through a penalty corner conversion by Grace Balsdon in the 13th minute before doubling their lead through a field strike from Elizabeth Neal in the 43rd minute.

The Indians, ranked ninth in the world, tried their heart and soul throughout the entire 60 minutes but failed to break the resolute English defence.

Besides champions England, runner-up India and Scotland, who defeated Italy 1-0, qualified from this event for the World Cup.

This edition of the World Cup will be jointly hosted by the Netherlands and Belgium from August 14 to 30 along side the men's tournament.

India began the game on the front foot with Navneet Kaur helping her side earn a penalty corner within the opening two minutes.

England beat India 2-0 in the final to cap their World Cup qualification with the title in Hyderabad on Saturday. HI MEDIA

However, her drag-flick from the resulting set piece was kept out by the England goalkeeper.

The hosts showed great discipline, maintaining a solid defensive shape while also making inroads on the end of the field.

However, England grew into the game towards the end of the first quarter, earning a penalty corner with two minutes to go. Balsdon made the most of that opportunity, finding the back of the net with her drag-flick and scoring her fifth goal from a penalty corner in this tournament to give England the lead. The second quarter began in a similar manner, with both the teams not giving much away in this engaging contest.

With eight circle penetrations in the first half, India were asking questions to the England defence but didn't really test the rival goalkeeper, allowing the visitors to hold onto their one-goal advantage at half time.

With the lead, England controlled the tempo of the game by neatly working the ball and maintaining possession.

India had a few opportunities to pile on the pressure, but the visitors stood firm at the back. England eventually doubled their lead courtesy Neal (43rd). The midfielder was fortunate as her effort deflected off an Indian defender before finding its way past Bichu Devi, giving the visitors a 2-0 lead at the end of the third quarter.

India continued to push forward in search of goals that would get them back into the game.

Result: India: 0 lt to England: 2 (Grace Balsdon 13th, Elizabeth Neal 43rd).

Long-jumper Lokesh claims gold in NCAA Indoors

Karnataka athlete clears 8.21m to set new indoor NR

NEW DELHI, PTI

Young Indian athlete Lokesh Sathyanathan achieved a major milestone in his fledgling career by winning the gold medal in the men's long jump at the NCAA Indoor Championships in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

With a leap of 8.21m, he set a new indoor national record and moved to third on the all-time list of Indian long jumpers, behind Jeswin Aldrin (8.42m) and Murali Sreeshankar (8.41m).

Lokesh, who is enrolled at Tarleton State University, set an indoor national record of 8.21m on his way to clinching the top podium spot in the fourth attempt of the final.

Lokesh finished ahead of De'Aundre Ward of University of Southern Mississippi, who leapt 8.20m to claim the second spot, and Tafadzwa Chikomba of Kansas State University, who finished third with a jump of 8.15m.

"I'm grateful and thankful to God because I know nothing is possible without him and of course my family back home (in Bengaluru) and my coach, who is my family here," Lokesh told The Stride Report after the achievement, which made him only the fourth Indian after Mohinder Singh Gill, Vikas Gowda and Tejaswin Shankar to win the NCAA Division I Indoor Track and Field Championships.

While his 8.17m final leap on Friday marked a significant leap from his 8.02m personal best, Lokesh is no stranger to the spotlight. His journey to this breakthrough includes multiple junior national titles and a stint representing India at the 2018 World Athletics U20 Championships.

India's Lokesh Sathyanathan won the long-jump gold at the NCAA Indoor Championships in Fayetteville, Arkansas with a new indoor national record leap of 8.21 metres. X

Pole vaulters Dev, Kuldeep start strong in season opener

ADITYA K HALDER
BENGALURU, DHNS

Madhya Pradesh pole vault duo Dev Kumar Meena and Kuldeep Kumar cleared the Commonwealth Games qualification standard with 5.25 metre attempts each on Day 1 of the National Open Jump competition here on Saturday.

While their selection for the July-August's Glasgow CWG is subject to Athletics Federation of India's clearance from selection committee, which also mandated participation in Federation Cup and Inter-State Championships later in the year, the pole vaulters would have a shot at breaking the nation's duck in the event.

The pole vaulters, coached by Ghanshyam Yadav, also attempted to improve the national record -- by Dev at 5.40m last July -- by setting the bar at 5.41m in pursuit of the Asian Games qualification standard of 5.45. However, none could go past it in their respective three attempts while Kuldeep posted his personal best. Tamil Nadu's M Gowtham took the third place with his best attempt of 5.10m.

"I am happy with the outcome as we came here with the mentality to clear the Commonwealth mark at least," Dev told *DH*. "However, my coach wanted to clear the Asian Games mark too, so a bit of disappointment there. But no worries, we have a long season ahead. We are likely to compete in Taiwan later, will look to improve there."

Triple jumper Abdulla Aboobacker clinched gold by clearing 16.83 metres at the Anju Bobby Sports Foundation in Bengaluru on Saturday.

Meanwhile star triple jumpers Abdulla Aboobacker and Praveen Chithravel breached the Asian Games qualification mark of 16.28m without much trouble. 2022 CWG silver medallist Abdulla took the gold with an attempt of 16.83 while NR holder Praveen leapt to 16.72 in a good start to their season as the day saw no 17-plus jump.

Tamil Nadu's Gailey Venister, who took third place, also cleared the Asiad mark with an attempt of 16.48.

In the high jump final, favourite Sarvesh Anil Kushare took the gold medal with an attempt of 2.14m but the Maharashtra athlete fell short of the Asiad mark of 2.19m despite going for the mark in his final attempts.

There was a surprise participation in the event too as differently-abled athlete Nishad Kumar, two-time Paralympics silver medallist and reigning Para World Champion, showed up at the able-bodied event while missing the World Para Athletics Grand Prix which concluded in New Delhi on Saturday. The 26-year-old para jumper, who is competing in an able-bodied event after three-year gap, managed a strong 2.10m jump to finish fifth in the event.

Meanwhile, Karnataka won their first medal, a gold, at the event as triple jumper Nithya Shree V, who won the two-participant women's U-20 final with her personal best of 12.00m. Daughter of a farmer from Kaggalahallli village in Budigere, Nithya made her debut in the U-20 category this season.

Results: Men: Triple jump: Abdulla Aboobacker (IAF) 16.83m, 1; Praveen Chithravel (TN) 16.78m, 2; Gailey Venister (TN) 16.48m, 3. **Pole vault:** Dev Meena (MP) 5.25m, 1; Kuldeep Kumar (MP) 5.25m, 2; M Gowtham 5.10m, 3. **High jump:** Sarvesh Kushare (Mah) 2.16m, 1; Aaditya Raghuvanshi (MP) 2.13m, 2; Swadhin Kr Majhi (Odi) 2.13m 3.

U-20: High jump: Basant (Raj) 2.14m, 1; Srivattsan N (TN) 2.09m, 2; Afroz Ahmad (Jha) 1.99m, 3. **Triple jump:** Dhanush Raj M (Ker) 15.08m, 1; Daksh Bishnoi (Pun) 14.98m, 2; Karthikeyan G (TN) 14.85m, 3

U-18: High jump: Devak Bhushan (Ker) 2.03m, 1; Zubin Gohain (JSW) 1.95m, 2; Virendra Ranaware (Mah) 1.85m, 3

Women: U-20: High jump: Nithya Shree V (Kar) 12m, 1; Pramar Hemanshiben (Guj) 11.14m, 2. Pole Vault: Tanu Yadav (UP) 3.55m, 1; Priyadharshini Veera (TN) 3.30m, 2; Chuki Birda (Raj) 3.20m.

Karnataka's Snigdha beats state-mate to emerge champ

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka's Snigdha Kanta capped an impressive week by clinching the girls' singles title at the ITF World Tennis Tour Juniors J60 Gurugram, defeating state-mate Padmapriya Ramesh Kumar 6-4, 6-4 in the final on Saturday.

Seeded second, the 16-year-old delivered a composed performance in the title clash, converting crucial break points in both sets to seal a straight-sets victory and claim one of the biggest titles of her junior career. Her run to the trophy was marked by steady performances throughout the week as she navigated a competitive international draw.

After dominating the early rounds, Snigdha levelled up in the closing stages of the tournament, defeating fifth seed Deepshika Vinayagamurthy 6-2, 3-6, 6-4 in the semifinals to set up an all-Karnataka title clash.

This victory adds valuable points to Snigdha's ITF World Tennis Tour Juniors campaign, where she climbed to a career high ranking of No. 448 earlier this season. She has also delivered consistent results on the domestic circuit, highlighted by her girls' singles title at the ITF World Tennis Tour Juniors J30 Raipur in March 2025, along with several strong finishes in national-level events.

Runner-up Padmapriya also enjoyed an impressive campaign in Gurugram. The 13-year-old reached the final without dropping a set, highlighted by a commanding 6-4, 6-1 win over top seed Prisha Nikhil Shinde in the semifinals. Although she fell short in the final, Padmapriya once again highlighted her rapid rise on the junior circuit with another strong international performance.

Padmapriya has already established herself as one of India's standout young talents. She has spent several weeks as India's No. 1 in the AITA Girls' Under-14 rankings and has also broken into the Top 100 of the national Under-16 rankings.

Champion Snigdha Kanta (right) and runner-up Padmapriya Ramesh Kumar, both from Karnataka, pose with their spoils at ITF World Tennis Tour Juniors J60 Gurugram event.

Futures Cup: Four Indians reach finals

BANGKOK, PTI: India's young boxers continued their impressive run at the World Boxing Futures Cup 2026, with Chandrika, Gunjan, Joyshree Devi and Ambekar Meetei advancing to the finals after registering convincing victories in their semifinal bouts here on Saturday.

In the women's 51kg category, Chandrika delivered a strong performance to beat Rihab Hamdoune of Morocco by Referee Stopped Contest (RSC) in Round 2, sealing her place in the gold-medal bout.

In the women's 48kg category, Gunjan delivered a dominant performance to defeat North Korea's Yu Gyong Kim by a 5-0 verdict.

Joyshree Devi (54kg) produced another commanding display, outclassing Mexico's Sofia Ramirez by Referee Stopped Contest (RSC) in the first round to secure her spot in the final.

In the men's 50kg category, Ambekar Meetei also advanced to the final after registering a 5-0 unanimous decision victory over Uzbekistan's Abdugani Yorkinjonov.

Meanwhile, Radhamani Longjam (57kg) fought a closely-contested bout but went down 2-3 to Ukraine's Yevanhelina Petruk in the semifinals, finishing with a bronze medal.

Saptak, Dhruv share top spot after Round 3

AHMEDABAD, PTI: Saptak Talwar and Dhruv Sheoran shared the top spot after round three of the DP World PGTI's USD 300,000 (INR 2.7 crore) Indorama Ventures Open Golf Championship here on Saturday.

Saptak (68-71-69) and Dhruv (69-69-70) were joint leaders with identical totals of eight-under 208. Saptak's error-free 69 helped him climb three spots while Dhruv's 70 saw him jump one position on day three.

Manu Gandas fired a 67, the joint lowest score of the day, to rise 11 positions to third place at seven-under 209. Aryaman Aditya Mohan also struck the day's joint lowest of 67 to end the round in tied fourth place at six-under 210 along with Arjun Prasad (69) and Clement Sordet (71) of France.

Saptak, who was overnight tied fourth and two shots off the lead, announced himself as a contender with his flawless round on Saturday.

Talwar, hailing from Greater Noida and a winner on the DP World PGTI last year, made his three birdies from a range of 10 to 20 feet on the fourth, eighth and 12th holes.

Saptak, who last played at Kalhaar in 2023, said, "I've been giving myself a lot of looks at birdies. The putter hasn't cooperated as much as I would've liked, however, I kept the errors out with just three bogeys over the first three days. I feel my game is trending in the right direction.

Dhruv Sheoran, who was overnight third and one shot off the lead, also continued to make steady progress.

Mayank becomes first GM from North-East & India's 94th

NEW DELHI, PTI: Talented youngster Mayank Chakraborty **(in pic)** crossed the final hurdle in his promising career by securing his third and final GM norm, becoming the 94th Grandmaster and the first from India's North-East region to achieve the coveted title.

Hailing from Guwahati in Assam, the 17-year-old Chakraborty -- who became an International Master in 2024 -- achieved the feat with a round to spare in the eighth round of the Hotel Stockholm North by First Hotels Chess Talents Tournament, defeating Swedish IM Philip Lindgren.

Chakraborty was at the top of his game in the victory over Lindgren, accumulating the required 6.5 points that were enough to secure his final Grandmaster norm. In the final round, he played out an exciting draw with English International Master Jonah B Willow to seal what was his most memorable performance to date.

Chakraborty also crossed the critical 2500 Elo rating mark in the process, with his current rating standing a few points above the threshold, thereby confirming the Grandmaster title as per the rules of the international chess federation, FIDE.

Chakraborty lost one game, drew two and won the remaining six to finish with seven points out of a possible nine, also clinching the tournament title in the process with a half-point lead over Norway's Aksel Bu Kvaloy, who received a last-round walkover.

In 2024, Chakraborty had become an International Master.

Gritty Bengaluru hold Bagan

ADITYA K HALDER
BENGALURU, DHNS

Bengaluru FC showed off their defensive might over 90 minutes to hold table toppers Mohun Bagan to a stalemate in an enthralling Indian Super League encounter at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Saturday.

The result ended defending champions Mohun Bagan's four-match winning spree while they remain atop the table with 13 points in five matches. It allows Jamshedpur FC, who are now the only side to win all their matches so far, a chance to go top of the table if they win their next match against NorthEast United at home on Sunday. MBSG, in fact, had the bulk of chances on the night while they took control of the possession (61 per cent) and created better opportunities, especially in the second half when they kept opening up spaces in the attacking third with Manvir Singh and Dimtri Petratos coming to live and started threatening BFC defense, who did everything in their ability to keep the clean sheet. BFC, however, can't take much from the morale victory as they remain sixth with eight points in five matches. A victory on the night could have lifted them to the third place and it's not like they had no shot at it.

Bengaluru FC's Sunil Chhetri (right) battles for possession against Mohun Bagan's Thomas Aldred during their ISL game at the Sree Kanteerava stadium. DH PHOTO/BK JANARDHAN

Their first crack at goal came as early as the third minute when Ryan Williams made a skilful run from the right to enter the box but Mohun Bagan goalkeeper Vishal Kaith reacted quickly to make an important save. BFC, in fact, were on the top for the first 15 minutes as they used the most of the 20,214-strong home crowd, including a packed away stand, to dominate both defensive and offensive aspect of the match. It was the first time in the season one could see the vision of coach Renedy Singh who professes on defending and attacking as a team.

However, with the quality that Mohun Bagan had in all departments, BFC knew they had to keep their defensive shape compact. With the likes of Jamie Maclaren, Petratos and Manvir in attack, BFC allowed the visitors to come at them and absorb the pressure with an eye for the counter-attack. The plan was never foolproof as Bagan had their chances to score and the best of it came after the half an hour mark when Maclaren had a chance to head the ball into the goal following a telling cross but he only managed to head it over the crossbar.

Ajsal earns Blasters a draw

KOLKATA, PTI: Muhammad Ajsal effected a dramatic stoppage-time header as Kerala Blasters FC snatched a 1-1 draw against East Bengal FC to open their account after Youssef Ezzejjari had put the home side in the lead early in an Indian Super League match here at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan on Saturday.

Youssef, the Spanish-Moroccan forward, gave East Bengal FC the lead in the 10th minute with a penalty, but Muhammad Ajsal cancelled the advantage at the death by scoring in the second minute of stoppage time to snatch a point for the Blasters.

The Kerala outfit began on a promising note but lost momentum when East Bengal FC broke the deadlock in the 10th minute against the run of play.

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PERSONAL

Change of Name

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **Ramesh Kumar,** residing at No. 175, 23rd Cross, 25th Main, Judicial Layout, Bangalore-560065, have changed my name to **RAMESH KUMAR D JAIN** vide affidavit dated 16-12-2025 before notary B.S. Padmaprasad, Bangalore.
Henceforth I shall be called **RAMESH KUMAR D JAIN** only

I, D BABU and BABU, R/at No.22, 3rd Cross, Gayathri Layout, KR Puram, Bengaluru- 560036, declare that the above name pertain to me only. Henceforth I shall be known as D babu, vide affidavit dated 06-03-2026 before notary Nijagunaradhya, Bengaluru.

I MAVILLA MANVITH SRINIVAS, A308, Splendid Royale Apartment, ITI Layout, 3rd Main, Bengaluru-68, have changed my name to MAVILLA SRINIVASA MANNVITH vide affidavit dated- 14/03/2026

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EMPIRE OF THE MIND

History's ironies: When illegal wars get the silent vote

Gurucharan Gollerkeri
The former civil servant enjoys traversing the myriad spaces of ideas, thinkers, and books

History has a cruel sense of irony. It rarely repeats itself in form, yet it often returns in spirit. The technologies change, the alliances shift, the rhetoric evolves – but the logic of power remains stubbornly familiar.

As the Gulf War enters its second week, the world watches a conflict wrapped in the language of peace. Military strikes launched even as diplomatic negotiations appeared to make progress. A war justified in the vocabulary of security, deterrence, and even liberation. Leaders speaking of stability while missiles redraw the strategic map of West Asia. And perhaps most striking of all: the uneasy quiet of a global order that once claimed to be built on rules, law, and the sanctity of sovereignty.

Such rhetorical inversions are not new. Great powers have long claimed necessity. What is striking today is the ease with which such claims pass with little serious institutional resistance.

The first irony lies within the Islamic world itself. What is often portrayed externally as a civilisational bloc is in reality fractured by enduring political and sectarian rivalries. The Sunni-Shia divide continues to shape regional geopolitics, while competition among powers such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey prevents any coherent collective response. Solidarity exists in rhetoric far more than in strategy. Into this fragmented landscape steps Pakistan, occasionally presenting itself as a mediator. Yet mediation requires credibility. A country long entangled in controversies surrounding militant networks struggles to command the trust required to stabilise crises. Mediation without credibility often deepens cynicism rather than resolving conflict.

A second irony concerns the narratives of leadership. Political figures across democracies frequently oscillate between the rhetoric of peace and the practice of force. Promises of ending wars coexist with the preparation for new ones. This duality is not unique to any individual leader; it reflects a deeper tension within the strategic culture of major powers. Yet the dissonance between rhetoric and reality has rarely appeared so stark – Trump and Netanyahu being prime examples.

The third irony lies in the paralysis of the institutions created precisely to prevent such crises. The United Nations was founded on a simple but profound principle: aggressive war must be constrained by international law. Article 2(4) of the UN Charter prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity of states. In practice, however, the system has always collided with the realities of power. Whenever a permanent member of the Security Council – or a close ally – is involved, the mechanisms of collective enforcement stall. The veto ensures that the most powerful states remain effectively beyond the reach of the rules they helped design. The UN continues to function as a humanitarian network and diplomatic forum. But as an instrument capable of restraining great-power force, it appears increasingly paralysed.

Does this represent a return to 19th-century geopolitics? Only partly. The 19th-century Concert of Europe operated within a small circle of imperial powers largely insulated from public scrutiny. Today, war unfolds in real time before a global audience. Legitimacy still matters. Yet, what may be emerging is something more subtle: a world of stratified sovereignty. On paper, every member of the UN is equal. In practice, sovereignty exists on a sliding scale shaped by military capability, nuclear deterrence, financial power, and technological control.

The instruments of influence today are rarely colonial armies. They are sanctions regimes, semiconductor supply chains, financial networks, and payment systems. Empire has evolved. Control can be exercised without colonies and influence, without annexation. For many states observing the current conflict, another lesson is difficult to ignore. Countries without credible deterrence remain vulnerable. The ideals of non-proliferation often collide with the strategic realities of survival in an unequal international system.

Beneath this vocabulary lies a familiar danger: moral absolutism. When warmongers become convinced that their cause is uniquely righteous, restraint begins to dissolve. The post-1945 international order was never purely idealistic. It was a bargain. Major powers accepted partial institutional constraints in exchange for legitimacy. The rules were imperfect, but they imposed constraints. Today, that restraint appears weaker. When the rules-based order becomes rules for some and discretion for others, smaller states draw an obvious conclusion: principles are luxuries for the protected. Everyone else must find a patron, build deterrence or accept vulnerability.

History's deepest irony may therefore lie here: An international order created to restrain power risks eroding precisely when its principles are most needed. The silence of global leaders may be tactical. Or it may be symptomatic. If it is the latter, then the crisis is not only regional. It is systemic. And history, with its unforgiving memory, will record not merely who acted – but who acquiesced. The moral question will run deeper: did the empire of power expand because the conscience of the world fell silent?

JUDGMENT DAY

Debt or equity? A question of form

While constitutional law and criminal law tend to occupy public discourse, it's the quiet hum of corporate law that keeps the economic system running, and of which the public is aware only sporadically. This is a shame because corporate law is a fascinating field of study, with the centrepiece of the domain being the artificial legal personality of the corporation that enables it to borrow, invest, contract, and sue others. At the same time, the separate lives of corporations are susceptible to economic risk, because the people who lend money to the corporation will usually have recourse only to the assets of the corporation, and not to the assets of the individuals behind the corporation.

Protecting creditors is the great preoccupation of corporate law. While the Companies Act, 2013, contains various creditor-friendly rules, the most significant provisions lie in India's bankruptcy code, which prioritises creditors over shareholders in asset distributions when a corporation becomes insolvent and liquidates. The corporation owes nothing to its shareholders if there is no money left in the kitty after the creditors have been satisfied. By acquiring equity in the company, shareholders can participate in the company's prosperity, but they are also singed by its failures.

Usually, the distinction between debt and equity is easy to discern, but in some cases, like *EPC Constructions v Matix Fertilizers*, a Supreme Court case decided last year, the distinction comes up for renewed scrutiny. A fertiliser company hired a construction company to build a fertiliser plant. Over a period of time, the fertiliser company owed a large sum of money to the construction company that remained unpaid, eventually stalling the construction. It's fascinating that when parties enter into contracts of this kind, they share each other's fates. The construction company's receivables depended on the successful completion of the factory. But the factory could not be constructed without an additional infusion of money. Because the dues were unpaid, the construction company was now not only a contractor but also a creditor of the fertiliser company.

The relationship continued to deteriorate with the declining financial viability of the fertiliser company. In desperation, the construction company agreed to convert the fertiliser company's debt into equity, becoming a preferential shareholder of the fertiliser company.

Nigam Nuggehalli
is a law professor who thinks that the law is too important to be left to the lawyers
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Why did this happen? Because the fertiliser company convinced the construction company that once there was more equity in the fertiliser company, other lenders would agree to provide more money on the assurance that the company stood on strong capital. The creditor's stature of preferential shareholder meant that the fertiliser company had to pay the sum it owed to the construction company after three years.

From the construction company's perspective, this was just a change of form, from a straightforward debt to something that was debt but swaddled in a form of equity. But in law, form matters. The fertiliser company could not pay its debts and entered insolvency proceedings. The preference shares had not been redeemed. In corporate law, a preference shareholder can receive the money back in a redemption only in two circumstances: either the company has made enough profits to redeem the preference shares, or there is money available for the redemption from a separate raising of equity money. Why? Because corporate law is designed to protect creditors and is concerned with money in the company getting diluted due to payouts to preferential shareholders.

The construction company filed a claim in the insolvency proceedings seeking its money back, not as a shareholder but as a creditor. But here, it ran into a problem because corporate law's concern is with creditors. Shareholders are not entitled to receive their money this way; in the order of distribution called the waterfall, they are the last in line. The courts refused to treat the construction company as a creditor, even though it assumed itself as one when its outstanding receivables were converted into equity.

But form is not merely a formality. When the matter reached the Supreme Court, the Court stated that the difference between debt and equity was fundamental. If the contract states that it's a share, it cannot be termed as debt. This case is critical because it says something important about the nature of commercial relationships – their dependence on form. Once the parties chose a form, they were bound by it, making it pointless to assert other underlying contractual intent. As the Court put it, "the eggs having been scrambled", the parties' "attempt to unscramble it must necessarily fail."

GADFLY

A letter from a student to a departed teacher

Dear Professor K N Panikkar, I read the news of your passing some days ago and had heard that you were ailing for a long time. I don't know if you remember me, but I do remember you, vividly. I was part of the last MA class you taught at the Centre for Historical Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, way back in the monsoon semester of the year 2000. My cohort was required to credit your course, 'History of Ideas in Colonial India,' in the first semester. We soon knew it was such a raging hit that students from other departments audited it, and people from outside attended it. In 2000, you were capping nearly 25 years of teaching at JNU, and for people like us, it was the entry into postgraduate study. Your exit and our entry came with a bang.

In that course, you co-explored society, culture, and attitudes of undivided India at the peak of colonial rule in the late 1700s and 1800s. That cohort had students from nearly a dozen states, even if some of them had been undergraduate students at the Delhi University's many colleges and were somewhat acclimatised to Delhi. As a historian, like a storyteller, you helped embed in us the qualities of observing and respecting the minutiae and seeming trivia of history. A research essay we read on a subject you mentioned (and wrote) embodied that. It was the one on the British incorporating certain Indian attitudes, like leaving their shoes behind while entering a household or even a court, that magnified the larger forces of history (from your essay *The 'Great' Shoe Question*): How something as small as wearing something, or not, was itself an act laden with sociopolitical meaning.

There was always a close reading of an essay after the close reading of another. The post-class discussions had to be curtailed since lunch at the hostel mess would finish. Your course gave us a rich view of colonisation and the Indian response to it, well before M K Gandhi's arrival. As was your wont, you took us to unusual places, where we, new students of this kind of history education, never imagined the historian would go. For instance, you discoursed with us on a pioneering Malayalam novel, O Chandu Menon's *Indulekha*. That story has many of the attributes of a 19th-century European novel. It also features a controversial narrative disruption that aroused the interest of Malayalam literary critics. You listened patiently to all our thoughts in that class. After a smile and a pause, you gave your answer, much like Holmes cracking a case to us Watsons.

Rahul Jayaram
teaches at the School of Film, Media and Creative Arts, R V University, Bengaluru
@rahjayaram

Without spoiling it for the reader, that explanation in class, too, over a work of literature, displayed the historian's alertness to all kinds of specific social detail at work in any given moment of human history or creativity.

Our first semester was already a heavy feast, and you kept the best for the end of the course. You dove us deep into the Bengal Renaissance and the vexed legacy of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. We read some essays from a critical and controversial edited volume. One of the essays, by historian Sumit Sarkar – *Rammohun Roy and the Break with the Past* – stirred up things in class, for it searchingly reassessed Roy. You gave that essay almost two or three classes, for it required a structured dissection. Not everyone was happy with what you had to say, but you left complex things open for discussion, as if to say some things couldn't be answered, and that staying with questions was important.

As was evident to us students, you weren't just a 'historian' in the typical sense of someone who examined the Grand Narrative of history. Like many of your peers, you were genuinely invested in the interplay between the so-called Grand Narrative and the everydayness, mess, and chaos of human life. You made us alert and pay attention to the mundane. The more I teach, the more I realise the work my teachers like you did for my preparation as a teacher. Travel well, Sir. I miss you and carry learnings from you to the best I can.

ROVING REFLECTIONS

Bending before insolent might

Rahul Gandhi has, for long, been lampooned by the ruling BJP and its allies – for his political choices and often, his personal traits. The Leader of the Opposition continues to take some serious stick over what is projected politically as his "weakness" and "indecisiveness", often juxtaposed with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's perceived "muscular" style of leadership.

These perceptions have had an interesting turnaround over the last couple of months. Gandhi and Congress have relentlessly attacked Modi for being overly deferential to the United States President Donald Trump, capitulating to his whims, his regressive tariffs, and frequent policy flip-flops. The opposition bloc's criticism centres on the Prime Minister's continued silence on repeated statements by Trump and his administration that undermine India's sovereignty.

This silence, of course, needs to be questioned. It is also worth noting that India is not the only country caught in this uneasy position. Great European powers, long-time American allies like the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, have largely chosen accommodation over confrontation. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has been the only European leader to stand up to Trump, who, in his second term, has unleashed absolute mayhem.

India's troubling apathy is now extended – inexplicably, even a war launched by the US and Israel on Iran has not broken the silence. We are often told by foreign policy pundits that Indian diplomacy is guided solely by national interest. But does that mean a nation must abandon its moral compass altogether? Must ethics have no place in geopolitics? Are morals irrelevant to national interest?

If the Holocaust is rightly remembered as an unprecedented act against humanity, can the indiscriminate bombing that has killed vast numbers of Palestinian civilians in Gaza – many of them women and children – and reduced homes to rubble, while imposing blockade-driven starvation, be morally ignored? Why has India, the land of Mahatma Gandhi, fallen silent?

Does a president intoxicated by unbridled power and fueled by an inflated ego have the right to violate constitutional norms and the UN Charter, deciding which country's leader is acceptable and which must be overthrown? Surrounded by fawning hawks eager for confrontation, can he unilaterally decide to decapitate regimes through assassination, bombing or forced removal?

Capt G R Gopinath (Retd.)
builds bridges, sometimes by tearing down walls. He is a soldier, farmer, and entrepreneur

If Iran's political system under its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is condemned as theocratic and authoritarian, what does that say of the West Asian monarchies that remain trusted allies of the US?

Who can forget the chilling murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul – a killing widely linked to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman? Yet the outrage quickly faded. The Trump administration at the time declined to release the report on the killing. The hypocrisy was glaring.

This hypocrisy is not new. For decades, the US has supported dictators who granted it access to military bases, oil or minerals, while opposing communist regimes or Islamist groups such as ISIS and the Taliban when it suited its strategic interests.

Iran has been a friend to India. At the same time, since the diplomatic opening under former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, India has built closer ties with Israel. These ties can strengthen defence cooperation, which is critical to India's resistance against Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism. But friendship also carries responsibility. It should give India the moral space to urge Israel towards the two-state solution, the only path to lasting peace in the region.

When Modi visited Russia after the invasion of Ukraine and told Vladimir Putin, "This is not the era of war," he won applause across the world. The Prime Minister spoke plainly, without rupturing India's relations with Moscow. That was statesmanship.

Today, India has a similar opportunity. As the world's largest democracy, imperfect but vibrant, it must speak in one voice for principle. It must condemn unilateral aggression by powerful nations against the weaker ones and the destabilisation of regions through military adventurism, and unequivocally oppose the killing of the innocent through acts that resemble State terrorism.

Such clarity would serve India's national interest far better than cautious silence. For, in international affairs, as in life, respect rarely follows those who appear to hunt with the hounds and run with the hares.

Let us recall Rabindranath Tagore's timeless lines from *Gitanjali*:

"This is my prayer to thee, my Lord – strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart...

Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might."

STATE, MARKET, SOCIETY

CSR at 12: Some good intent, some State-forced compliance

Ashwin Mahesh
A social entrepreneur, founder of Mapunity and LVBL, and co-founder, Lithium, wakes up with hope for the city and society, goes to bed with a sigh
@ashwinmahesh

In 2013-14, during the last months of the UPA government, mandatory Corporate Social Responsibility provisions were added to the Companies Act. Firms of a certain size that are profitable are required by law to spend money on public welfare, whereas prior to that, such spending was voluntary. Companies gave to society because they wanted to. Henceforth, they would have to.

There is something odd about the State mandating the market to give to society. But it was not surprising. Post-independence India harboured a deep suspicion about private enterprise, and successive governments took it upon themselves to shepherd the private sector. Telling companies how they should spend their profits was bound to happen.

In the dozen years since then, a lot of water has flowed under this bridge. A few other developments have also taken place, which have shaped the landscape for giving. As a result, there is enough to look back on, and ask what has worked well, what hasn't, and how the way forward could be different.

On the plus side, the law has brought a lot of money into the giving space and turned a lot more companies towards this path. Close to Rs 40,000 crore is now spent on CSR initiatives. While a lot of this is in places companies find easier to work in, the law has reached everywhere. A few months ago, I compiled a list of companies based in the poorest district in the state that were reporting CSR spending and found at least 25.

On the downside, many of them were not naturally inclined to give, nor had they made it a habit. As a result, many firms now view it as compliance, and typically assign one of the managers to 'take care of this too'. Such people are usually not incentivised to perform as competently as their core functions, and in many cases, don't know how to do it. So they've been dutifully checking the boxes as asked. Most of this money is wasted.

Another chunk of wasted money is from spending on things that are quite complex. The trouble with forcing people to spend on public purposes is that they begin to think of themselves as experts in their chosen subjects, which they clearly are not. The asymmetry of power between those who give money and those who receive it feeds this mistake.

A lot of the problems are social and political, and cannot be addressed by technical, financial or managerial interventions. But if those are the only tools an organisation has to guide its spending, it will inevitably see the problem through those lenses.

Others grumbled that they were being asked to do the State's job. There's some truth to that. We're now seeing a trend: many government departments are seeking CSR funds to do things they should be doing themselves. Often, when the public seeks something from the government, the response is, 'Can we find CSR money to do that?' The answer is often 'no,' and even a 'yes' comes at the cost of saying no to something else.

There is some good news. In the middle of all this flux, some companies have also seen the law as an opportunity to do some good, and even told themselves they could spend the funds better than the *sarkar* might have done if it had been paid as taxes instead. A few are developing theories of change, and spending CSR monies according to the theses they have developed. These are true green shoots, even if they are too few.

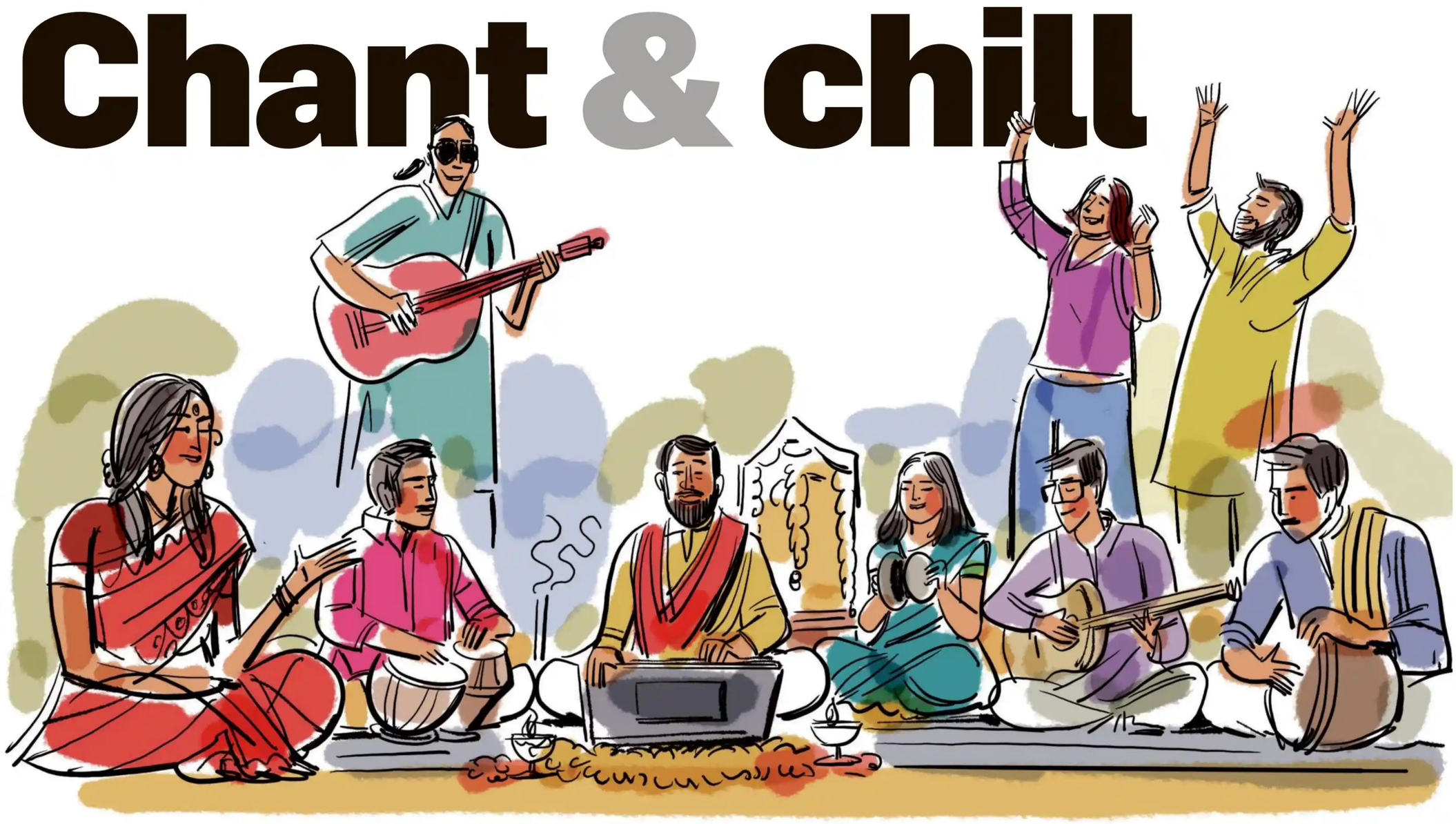
But they too face constraints. Doing 'good' is honey to political bees, and inevitably, the government began to steer this. The range of things companies could give to was reduced, reporting requirements were raised, and some companies were nudged to give to favoured recipients and goals. The Nehruvian State is alive and well, decreeing that it alone knows whither we must go.

One area that sensible spenders would like to focus on is support for communities. There is a dawning realisation that NGOs are not the best stewards of changemaking, and that local communities might be more invested in progress. Also, local people can engage the government in a very different way compared to how NGOs approach the State. Citizens have a kind of freedom that organisations don't, and it's worth leveraging that.

In an ideal world, the guidance from the government would be very different: teach young people to become problem solvers in different domains, collaborate with the State to help it conceptualise and execute policy, and accelerate the adoption of good products, services, and solutions. That matrix for changemaking would fit well within the meaning of 'social responsibility,' coupled with the strengths of the corporate world.

Bass drops, LED lights flash, and a crowd sways in unison. Only this isn't a rave. Across Indian cities, Gen Z is turning devotional music into a nightlife experience. Is bhajan clubbing a genuine spiritual revival, a clever rebrand of kirtan, or simply the concert economy discovering faith? Smitha Murthy hunts for answers

Chant & chill



DH ILLUSTRATION BY SAJITH KUMAR

"Large numbers of the youth are gathering in different cities across the country. The stage is decorated... There is lighting, music... There is all the pomp and show, and the atmosphere is no less than a concert. But what is being sung there is a bhajan."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mann ki Baat

About 15 years ago, I went to my first and last club. It was a cold night in Liangyungang, China, hardly the capital of clubbing. My Scottish friend was tired of quiet nights and wanted a raucous, thumping evening. And so it was that we landed up at this psychedelic club in the middle of the night. I was fighting sleep and found myself pushed to the centre of a throng of people who were strangely jumping on a dance floor that was also moving. It was dizzying and noisy. I jumped along on that heaving floor for two hours before throwing up — the combination of lights, music and a moving floor proved too much.

I never tried this combination again. It seemed a strange way to punish yourself. But that was then, and now, in India, we are seeing something new: the rise of bhajan clubbing. The same lights. The same head-thumping, bass-heavy music. But devotional songs instead of rap or hip-hop. It seems odd, but this is taking off like never before, especially among today's Gen Z.

No alcohol-fuelled nights. No next-day hangover. Just a spiritual high?

Expectation vs reality

Riddhi Sharma, the founder of a content marketing agency, was "super-excited" when she first heard about bhajan clubbing. She describes herself as spiritually inclined, chanting the Hanuman Chalisa in the mornings. "So, when I saw a trend like this, I was definitely excited to explore. I loved the viral reels with Hanuman Chalisa, with bhajans that slowed my feed down and decluttered my mind. So, the viral world became my teaser to a trend that felt enjoyable as well as peaceful."

The expectation didn't quite match reality. "It turned out to be the opposite of what I had imagined. Somewhere during the evening, I realised the bhajans were being sung almost the way we consume reels. Short, stitched, fast. Two lines here, two lines there. A mash-up of bhajans, Hindi film songs, chants — everything flowing into everything else," she says.

There wasn't time for her to process the emotion in each bhajan. Despite the palpable disappointment, bhajan clubbing is already taking off in cities like Bengaluru, Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata. And even in the US, where people are seeking sober spaces for a night out. The US saw what was billed as its "first ever" Bhajan Clubbing Night in New Jersey in January this year, held at the Royal Albert's Palace, with more than 400 attendees. Google Trends shows that searches for "bhajan clubbing", "modern kirtan", and "sober rave India" rose 400–600% since early 2024.

Concert with a tilak?

Not everyone is raving about it. In a post on social media, Deval Mistry opined that bhajan clubbing isn't a spiritual revival. "It's the concert economy wearing a tilak," he writes. India's youth isn't craving spirituality. They are craving experiences. Anything that offers community energy and emotional release will attract this crowd. They aren't here for the bhajans as much as the aesthetic.

> Reports suggest bhajan clubbing draws up to 15,000 people per event. And it is now increasingly a part of haldi ceremonies, sangeet openings and cocktail evenings — minus the alcohol. Why is Gen Z so attracted to these gatherings, though?

A white paper by the Management School of Events and Experience Design (MSEED) at Bhavan's College, Mumbai, estimated that bhajan clubbing draws up to 15,000 people per event. And this viral event is now increasingly a part of haldi ceremonies, sangeet openings and cocktail evenings — minus the alcohol. Why is Gen Z so attracted to these gatherings, though?

I turned to Dr Jayachandra, who teaches at REVA University and should know a thing or two about Gen Z.

"When I see young people filling satsangs and bhajan nights, my first reaction is mixed. On one hand, I appreciate that they are connected to culture, tradition and faith. However, as a teacher, I also wonder whether some youngsters may be spending excessive time in such gatherings at the cost of their personal growth, academics and responsibilities. Spirituality should strengthen a person, not replace their effort in real life. When young minds begin to surrender their independent thinking or give complete control of their decisions to others in the name of devotion, it becomes concerning," he explains.

It's all about balance for him.

"Working closely with students, I see that many are searching for meaning, belonging and mental peace. Some do attend bhajan events, especially when they are feeling stressed or emotionally low."

Dr Jayachandra's concerns are not unfounded. When something is a trend, there's always a company that wants to cash in on the trend. So with bhajan clubbing. Different revenue streams have already been identified. Now, you have devotional merchandise to go with your bhajan clubbing. Prasad hampers to take back home. Surely, it's all a tad commercial?

Tune in, tune out

Amanpreet Singh agrees and disagrees. He would love to experience a bhajan clubbing event at least once, he confesses.

"The idea of creating that collective energy, that shared vibration, sense of oneness — this idea feels powerful to me. When people tune into a single chant or rhythm, thoughts and emotions could sync beautifully?" he wonders. Shalini Murthy, a content professional in Chennai, doesn't quite share Amanpreet's optimism. "I genuinely don't think bhajan clubbing is going to do much for spirituality. You can sit inside a rock performance and still be spiritual, and you can also sit inside bhajan clubbing and just think about prasad." For her, the spiritual journey starts with the self, and not bhajan clubbing.

Twenty-five-year-old Nikhil Gupta, the founder of Sanatana Journey, is one of the most recognised organisers in this space. At the time of writing this story, the startup was gearing up for what it termed "India's biggest devotional music festival" on March 1 in Delhi. The cheapest tickets were Rs 1,199, with VIP options available.

"No alcohol, no smoke. Only pure vibes and high energies," the promo banner states.

The artists include Madhavas Rock Band, Agam Aggarwal, Aarti Khetarpal and Aayana Dance Company. Unlike traditional clubbing events that may start late evening, this one starts at 12 pm and ends around 10 pm.

Evidently, there's huge commercial value. Production costs are lower than conventional music concerts because there's no alcohol licensing or late-night security costs. Margins are way higher, which explains why we have so many organisers eyeing a slice of this spiritual pie.

What's different now?

Much before bhajan clubbing had a name, Sounds for the Soul, run by Nirvaan Birla, had its own version of experiential clubbing. Merging contemporary production with devotional lyrics, Sounds for the Soul was a pioneer, attracting loyal audiences. Then we have Backstage Siblings with Prachi and Raghav. They are known as India's jamming band and recently launched the 'World's Biggest Jamming Tour.' The duo has more than 300,000 Instagram followers, catering to a mostly Gen Z audience. It helps that Prachi and Raghav are both in their 20s, combining to bring that unique fervour of devotion and music. Their jamming tour is already live, with Phase I covering cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Kolkata.

> Once you strip away the bright lights, the LED screens, the pulsating music and political endorsements, what we have is a generation that is lonely, restless, flooded with choices and always craving meaning amidst the silence of likes and reactions.

But the more I read about this, the more I watched videos of bhajan clubbing, the more perplexed I became. Wasn't this just a modern version of kirtans? Haven't we always been gathering in groups and singing bhajans? Think of the Bhakti Movement, which had all the same elements. Mass devotional singing, communal chanting and an ecstatic spiritual experience.

Where we now have Backstage Siblings, we already had Mirabai, Tukaram and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu building their own spiritual clubs. We all know of ISKCON, which has been organising high-energy kirtans since the 1960s. Youth has always been part of spiritual movements. What's different?

An antidote to loneliness

To start with, the framing. The use of the word 'clubbing' alone shows that this is a deliberate positioning against nightlife culture. This is viewed as an alternative to alcohol-fuelled nights.

The venues are also different. From temples and living rooms, it's now stadiums with nightclub-style lighting and LED screens. Entries are ticketed compared to the old donation system. And there's the whole social media angle. These are experiences packaged and produced for Instagram and YouTube, where the majority of today's Gen Z lives.

You might be tempted to call this a fad. A passing trend. But Riddhi cautions against such early judgements. This is a format that is still finding its rhythm, she avers. The intent is clear: events with energy and soul.

But more than just a casual event, Riddhi sees these events as attracting something deeper: our search for connection and meaning.

"We are living through digital fatigue," she explains. "After endless scrolling, people are craving physical experiences again. The concert economy is growing because shared spaces and live energy feel real in a way screens no longer do."

Perhaps she is right. Once you strip away the bright lights, the LED screens, the pulsating music and political endorsements, what we have is a generation that is lonely. Brought up on social media, today's Gen Z is restless. Flooded with choices and yet craving meaning. This generation is going through something we have never documented before: the loneliness of growing up online, to the resounding silence of likes and reactions.

While earlier generations had addas and college canteens, this generation has found casual community life increasingly hard to find.

Stress and emotional lows aren't new — they are the default for this generation. Gen Z has more apps than other generations ever did. They are more connected than ever before. More than a million reels to scroll through. Yet, bhajan clubbing offers something to this already-jaded generation that no app or reel can offer: the connection of community. A stage for music, a gathering to celebrate and people to connect with. Any concert can provide this, but this isn't any concert. This is spiritual jamming. Social connecting. Devotional clubbing. Bhajan clubbing is meeting a need for stillness in the noise. It is offering a sense of community amidst the chaos.

If that involves one entry ticket, so be it.

MIXED BAG

***'Mixed Bag' is your Sunday potpourri** — an assortment of snappy articles, engaging ideas and snackable nibbles about this and that, from here and there. Dip in!*

Unveiling the essence of kantha

Kantha, often considered the simplest form of Indian embroidery, has in recent decades been used as an ornamental craft. Sarees, dupattas and home textiles bearing these minimal yet vivid patterns are at the forefront of one's mind when one thinks of handicraft from West Bengal. However, traditionally, its function was neither simple nor meant for beautification. It is this — the origins of kantha — that fashion designer Amit Vijaya explores in the exhibition 'Threads that Bind: The Kantha Project', which opened at Gallery Vayu, Delhi, on Wednesday. "This exhibition has been three years in the making," begins Vijaya, who is originally from Kolkata. Growing up surrounded by the rich textile traditions of the region, he saw firsthand how threadbare garments were strengthened through these seemingly simple and repetitive stitches and turned into something new. The craft gets its name from the Sanskrit word 'kontha', which translates to rags. The worn cotton muslin sarees and dhotis of rural women and men of Bengal were rarely thrown away. Instead, they were layered and stitched together. The resultant fabric was used as a quilt.

'Tree of Life'

'Ode to Indigo'

"These were heritage pieces that were then handed down through generations. Almost all of them had the name of the family or who it belonged to embroidered on them," Vijaya notes. Often, it was a community exercise. After a full day's work in the fields or at home, women would sit together outside their homes and stitch while chatting and catching up, he shares, adding that there was zero wastage. "Even the yarn used for stitching was deweaved fabric from another piece of cloth that was perhaps on its last legs," he explains.

"In my line of work, visiting craft fairs is part of the job. I have seen how the term 'kantha' has been mislabeled and misrepresented. It has been relegated to mean 'running stitch embroidery,'" he explains. And hence, he wanted to spotlight the craft form and highlight its essence. He hopes this will be the first of many exhibitions, focusing on the textile traditions of India. For this showcase, Vijaya and his team put out posts on social media asking for individuals to donate old fabric that they had no use for. They received decades-old Kanjeevarams, intricate kalamkaris almost in tatters and block-printed Bagru sarees. Vijaya also turned to his own label for excess indigo-dyed fabric. A total of 13-15 pieces make up the exhibition.

A nearly 60-year-old Kanjeevaram, a bridal saree of a donor's mother, is a particularly interesting piece in the collection. "It has now been turned into a throw. It can also be used as a dupatta," Vijaya says.

A kalamkari saree with the 'tree of life' rendered entirely through Telugu script is another highlight. "The design was completely faded, and the fabric was almost torn. But we strengthened the fabric through kantha work without taking away from the kalamkari," he recalls. The collection also references crafts like pojagi, boro, and sashiko.

While boro is a Korean patchwork technique that uses silk and ramie fabrics, boro is a Japanese patching and mending technique typically using indigo-dyed cotton, and sashiko, also from Japan, is an embroidery style used to reinforce weak fabric.

The exhibition is on until March 20 at Gallery Vayu, Delhi.

RASHMI RAJAGOPAL

FEEDBACK
Like this story? Write to us at **dhonsunday@deccanherald.co.in**

ASTROSPEAK

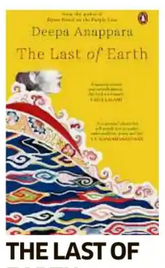
Guruji Shrii Arnav

Scan the QR code to read the ***weekly horoscope***

Anappara's atmospheric novel explores imperial ambitions while keeping the focus firmly on the erased Indian surveyors who helped map the British Empire, writes Sheila Kumar

Across the uncharted

The landscape of Tibet is a dominant character in the novel and is described in a detailed lyrical way on almost every other page.



THE LAST OF EARTH
Deepa Anappara
Penguin,
pp 384, Rs 899

The ethics of map-making and the invisibilisation of those who helped the British Empire in doing so are at the heart of Deepa Anappara's second book of fiction. Coming many years after Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line, her first, well-received one, this book, too, is meticulously researched and beautifully written.

The story unfolds in two ways — one, as a carefully plotted adventure in which two sets of people with different motivations journey illicitly across Tibet. The other is a quiet meditation on many issues, existential and otherwise.

The year is 1869. Tibet is closed to the Western world, and this puts a spoke in the wheel of the British Empire's ambitions to map it and expand the empire. To get around this, they start to train Indians as surveyors so that they can enter Tibet illicitly and map it.

Two groups are making parallel journeys across Tibet, and these are chronicled in alternating chapters. They will meet at the end, changed by their circumstances and experiences. In one, we have an Englishman, simply called the Captain throughout, and his second-in-command, Balram, an Indian schoolteacher trained as a surveyor, and one who has taken many such undercover trips into Tibet for the British. They are accompanied by a vast retinue of bearers, animals and stores needed for the long journey.

The captain wishes to chart the course of the Tsangpo River and discover where it meets the sea. He is poorly disguised as a monk, and there is the ever-present danger that if he is exposed as a white man, it will mean death not just for him but for his companions, too. This does not deter him. As Balram's father says, 'It's in the nature of white men to believe they own the world, that no door should be shut to them.'

Balram has come on this perilous mission for reasons of his own. He wants to find his friend who has gone missing while doing a surveying job for the British.

One of the other two people making the same journey is a British woman, Katherine, who is part Indian, which makes her disguise as an Indian pilgrim more authentic. She wants to be the first European woman to visit Lhasa, having been thwarted twice in doing so. Denied a fellowship in the all-male Royal Geographical Society in London, she sees this opportunity as a means to make a mark and gain entry. She is accompanied by a wise manservant who wishes to become a monk soon.

All of the three main characters — the captain, Balram and Katherine — are conflicted and share a restlessness of mind. They are happy travelling and away from home, however dangerous the journey. The captain feels bitter at the fact that his early promise seems to have dissipated and hopes the maps he will now make bring him fame and immortality. He states grandiosely, 'Our little drawings will one day reshape the world.' Katherine's dubious antecedents and her experiences back home render her the eternal outsider; on this trip, she carries the memory of her deceased sister. Her travel, then, is a way of escaping from herself.

It is the same for Balram. He is wracked by guilt and conflicting emotions. All of this stems from his relationship with his missing friend and his differently-abled son. The nature of that friendship borders on the illicit, though neither act on it. At the same time, he feels intensely competitive as his friend is considered the better surveyor by the captain. The journey will offer both Balram and Katherine space to introspect on their life and past behaviour.

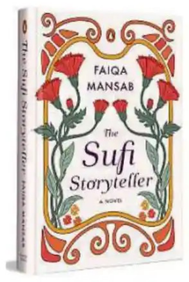
Through both the white protagonists, the story examines their obsessive ambitions in attaining their goals, never mind the cost it extracts. The help and support of the Indians who accompanied them is critical to them. And yet, as the book points out, no mountain or place is named after them; it is the white man who gets the glory and the immortality; the native is simply erased.

The Buddhist idea of the impermanence of life is threaded significantly through the book. All that the travellers face during their journey — floods, extreme weather, bandits, snow lions — can mean a loss of life at any instant. Maps can be rendered incoherent 'if the earth shrugged, mountains would cleave, rivers would surge, seas would swallow cities and fields alike.'

The landscape of Tibet is also a dominant character throughout. It is described in a detailed lyrical way on almost every other page, to make the reader pause to soak it in, and soon get so immersed that they become a co-traveller on the journey. In short, this sublime, immersive, gripping book moves you even as it makes you think.

Acts of preservation and rebellion

This genre-bending novel is a joyride into the realm of mysticism, but is also an emotional tale of a mother-daughter relationship and the choices they make, writes Swati Nair



THE SUFI STORYTELLER
Faiqa Mansab
Penguin, pp 320,
Rs 599

Faiqa Mansab's The Sufi Storyteller opens with a startling discovery. A woman lies dead in the library of a small American university. She is discovered by Layla, a professor of women's histories and storytelling. Layla particularly focuses on Sufi stories, their heavy dependence on symbolism, and on the aspects that set them apart from other storytelling traditions. She is also on a quest to find her birth mother, and now her search has widened to know the identity of the woman in the library. When it emerges that the dead woman carried a note addressed to Mira, a celebrated Sufi storyteller with a grey past, the two are forced into an uneasy alliance.

Together, Layla and Mira enter what Mansab calls "the realm of Story"— a dimension where narrative holds power and traditions safeguard truths through fiction. Combining elements of literary mystery, theoretical forays into storytelling itself, and a meta-fictional examination of how stories function, Mansab pulls us into a setting where the Story is akin to a living, breathing character.

This genre-blending and bending approach is unusual and original. The narrative is a heady mix of mysticism, commentary on gender, and narrative theory that feels fresh because Mansab challenges conventional interpretations of familiar tales. For instance, she presents a version of Little Red Riding Hood where the girl doesn't represent disobedience and is punished, but rather is initiated into adulthood and power. "A story long distorted by male storytellers," says Mira as she narrates the "true story". In this re-telling, Red Riding Hood kills the wolf herself, and the "Old Woman emerged from the Wolf's bones and the Wolf spirit, born anew." She thus releases her grandmother, and is blessed with wisdom on how to reinforce her wild spirit against those who would domesticate or control it.

Beneath these against-the-grain approaches lie a philosophical foundation, which rests on the concept that Sufi stories function as protective spells against life's cruelties and human corruption. They heal both speaker and listener, carrying talismanic properties embedded in layers of meaning that reveal themselves gradually. These narratives are preserved through a clandestine network of women over centuries, adapting them to changing contexts, protecting them from censorship, and communicating through secret codes known only to those on the inside.

"They are altered and passed on from generation to generation, like rare woven shawls, carpets and rugs. Like cloth, stories are woven, embroidered, changed and enhanced."

Mansab writes like a Sufi poetess herself. Her prose is exquisite, exuding magic off the pages with lush wording and beautiful settings as she weaves in many a folktale. It's this writing that sustains the momentum even when the narrative falters at times, sliding into extended philosophising and abstract discussions about the craft of storytelling.

Layla and Mira are the most compelling characters in the book. Layla emerges as an intelligent, thoughtful person who deals with the pain of not knowing her mother. Mira has survived unimaginable crises in her past and is the epitome of resilience as she copes with the after-effects of trauma. Mira's story, which takes up the middle portion of the book, is perhaps the most engrossing part of the novel. It's harrowing to read, but it also contains the book's deepest emotional truths and most powerful writing. Mansab's prose is at its finest here as she explores the persistence of grief and what it can do to us.

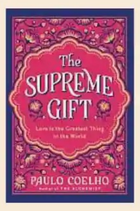
The Sufi Storyteller straddles multiple universes with its narrative. It's a mind-bending ride into the realm of mysticism and folklore. It's a razor-sharp sword dismantling myths and false narratives built by patriarchy. It's an emotionally-wrought tale of a mother and the choices she has to make, and a daughter's search for the truth.

"I'd like to focus on the carpet as a symbol of storytelling in Sufi stories. I could write about weaving as a dynamic metaphor for storytelling in Sufi stories..." says Gul, Layla's student, at one point.

Mansab is that weaver. She is the Sufi storyteller who captures a multi-dimensional world like lightning in a bottle to give us this poem of a book.

Readers willing to enter this world will be treated to a narrative that considers stories not as entertainment but as acts of preservation and rebellion. And the stories we protect today may be the ones that protect us tomorrow.

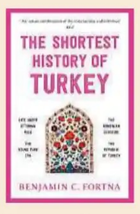
BOOKRACK



THE SUPREME GIFT
Paulo Coelho
HarperCollins,
pp 112, Rs 399
Henry Drummond defined love as the culmination of 9 elements: patience, kindness, generosity, humility, gentleness, dedication, tolerance, sincerity and innocence. Reflecting on this, Paulo Coelho brings us his interpretation of love.

QUEEN TARA
Frontier Medha Deshmukh B
Penguin, pp 320,
Rs 499
From the ashes of defeat, a spark caught. A woman rose to meet the challenge. Tara, literally a radiant star. She galvanised the resistance, crafted brilliant, unorthodox strategies, and fought with unyielding courage.

ALGO
Sharad Nalawade
Cool Physics, pp 300,
Rs NA
Yug, a brilliant mathematician haunted by inexplicable psychic episodes, seeks out world-renowned physicist Hrida, only to uncover a mystery that defies the very laws of nature.



THE SHORTEST HISTORY OF TURKEY
Benjamin C Fortna
Picador, pp 256,
Rs 599
This brilliant distillation traces Turkey's long and complicated history from the rise and decline of the Ottoman Empire to the emergence of the modern Turkish Republic.

HEARTLINES
Chandrani Ghosh
Bloomsbury, pp 288,
Rs 399
Sharmila Basu has curated the perfect life. He is the one variable she never planned for. From the gala circuits of DC and the quiet porches of Iowa City to the sun-drenched streets of San Sebastian, Spain, this is a love triangle unlike any other.

INTERVIEW

When silence is also a language

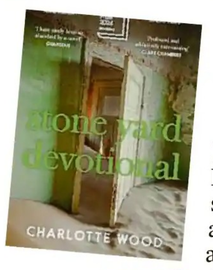
In a chat with Saurabh Sharma, Australian novelist Charlotte Wood discusses the difficulties of writing about sexual violence and trusting the subconscious

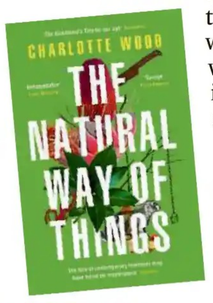
Early in the book, the unnamed protagonist of Stone Yard Devotional (Sceptre, 2023) notes the following about being inside a church. She says, "It's impossible to see out". Then, how does one "see the world beyond"? Via the church's doors, she reflects.

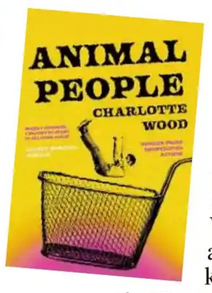
When Simone says that it is a rather "clumsy metaphor", one is immediately reminded of several such innocent reflections about one's circumstances. Often, things can appear silly yet profound. A case in point is how the protagonist concludes this thought: "The beauty of being here is largely the silence, after all. Not having to explain, or endlessly converse." Now, here's Charlotte Wood's trademark in this conclusion: her distinct ability to present characters having conversations with themselves in private that speak of a larger silencing, isolation, and aloneness. The meaning isn't forced; it's there for readers to discover.

The author, who was shortlisted for the 2024 Booker Prize with her seventh novel and is on the longlist of the 2025 International Dublin Literary Award, was at the Jaipur Literature Festival recently. In a conversation with *DHoS*, she spoke about her other award-winning title and how layered grief can be. *Edited excerpts:*

Charlotte Wood. (PIC COURTESY: JLF)







When you set your characters in a space that's enclosed, the narrativisation can become static. How can you be inventive in such a novel?

This was a particular problem with Stone Yard Devotional because the women in the book are in this cloistered monastery, the point of which is stillness and silence, and just a repeated everyday rhythm with no variety or change. But you need to have change and momentum along a narrative path in a novel. In the beginning, it was a big struggle for me to find where this movement or energy was going to come from. I did it partly with different timeframes.

In The Natural Way of Things, you give insights into the unspeakable horror in the lives of these 10 women who have been held captive. How do you ensure that subject matters like these are not trivialised by a voyeuristic gaze?

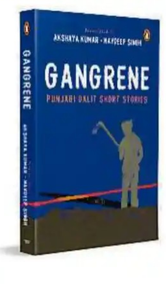
That was a really big question for me when I was writing The Natural Way of Things — how to write about the misogynistic behaviour of men and our culture without becoming titillating about it. I had to write it so that it felt upsetting and real, but not to the point where I felt that I was being misogynistic. I had some rules for myself that I would not write about anything graphic about sexual violence, and I think what made that book work was that there was always the threat of that. So it was difficult, and I'm not sure if I got it right.

In weaving themes like environmental degradation alongside personal tragedies, Stone Yard Devotional becomes a story where there's grieving for Mother Nature. Was it a conscious decision?

I don't want to write books that have messages with a capital M. I don't want to tell anybody what they should think or feel about things. The Natural Way of Things was quite a didactic, sledgehammer kind of book. And I'm glad that I wrote that book because it came out of rage. I didn't want to write another book like that; instead, I wanted to [explore] a much more morally complex world.

And you're right in pointing out what's called 'Solastalgia', which is climate grief — a kind of syndrome where you grieve the natural world — with Stone Yard Devotional. [This] was less consciously controlled, though. I didn't want to wrestle with this idea or control the novel too hard, so what I was doing was: let this happen, or don't make it happen. And when you let your subconscious come to the fore, it makes those connections without you even realising it. I didn't think I knew I was writing about my mother and my grief, but I didn't make the connection with climate grief consciously. But my unconscious was somehow doing it for me. It has taken me a long time to realise that I can trust the unconscious to do this important work that gives depth to the work.

READ OF THE WEEK



In percentage terms, Punjab has the highest Dalit population in India (around 30 per cent of its population). Despite these figures, Punjabi Dalit writing has struggled to find recognition.

Initial writings about Dalit issues were largely by the stalwarts of Punjabi literature like Nanak Singh, Gurbaksh Singh Preetlari, Kulwant Singh Virk and Gurdial Singh. Since the 1970s, though, Punjabi Dalit writing has undergone a shift in consciousness with the emergence of Attarjit, among the earliest Dalit writers to make a mark. Soon, others like Prem Gorkhi, Mohan Lal Phillauria, and Bhagwant Rasulpuri emerged.

Gangrene is an attempt to compile some of Punjabi literature's most powerful short stories on Dalit themes and issues. Carefully curated by Prof Akshaya Kumar and Navdeep Singh, this volume features stories on a variety of issues ranging from caste identities and rural exploitation to urban life and housing. Searing in its indictment of casteism, this volume is a window to a better understanding of Punjabi society.

Navdeep Singh is an assistant professor of English at M R Government College, Fazilka. Akshaya Kumar is a professor at the Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

TIES AND KNOTS

Of LOVE and LOSS

The sense of loss is both a witness and a legacy.

The death of a loved one is not something anyone heals from ever. Loss brings in its wake guilt, grief, and a set of comforting rituals. Time, perhaps, can help us become more graceful sufferers, writes Arundhati Ghosh

They lie when they tell you that time heals all wounds. The death of someone you love dearly isn't something you can completely heal from ever. From the finality of their absence emerges a sense of loss that does not arrive like a season with a plan for exit. Once it comes, it mostly stays. Clinging to the fragments left unfinished by the departed, it seeps into the bones of objects that belonged to them and experiences they have claims over. Most unsettling is their lingering presence in all the spaces they once occupied, and yet not physically existing anywhere at all. A colleague once told me that she was torn between scrubbing her recently departed mother's pillowcase to rid it of the smell of her hair oil, and keeping it preserved for as long as she could. She said the smell entered her sleep and unhinged the carefully arranged sanity she wrapped herself in, post her mother's passing.

Our relationship with the death of a loved one is complicated. Some make shrines. Lament is ritualised, practiced into habit. A friend's sister would not allow anyone to enter her deceased father's room insisting that it would sully his sacred memory. Some clear the shelf. They give away not just belongings of those gone but also habits of being together. "I can't go running anymore, so I am listening to podcasts instead," a friend shared, filling the empty shelf with new routines. Some are lost indefinitely attempting to make sense of their new reality, while still others throw themselves headlong into work. While these are ways to deal with the emptiness, sometimes 'dealing' can be a way of dodging the inevitable. Have we accepted the loss? Have we allowed grief to find a room in us? Grief is a stubborn guest. It does not turn away even if the door is shut. And without settling in, it does not ease its relentless grip.

Survivor guilt

The death of a loved one sometimes brings a feeling of guilt — that of surviving them. I listen to older women, including my mother, who have lost their husbands talk about counting days, and waiting to meet their spouses in the afterlife. As if they are on borrowed time. Their guilt is made darker with patriarchy calling them shameless and unlucky for lingering long after their husbands have passed. Parents who bear the inconsolable burden of the passing of their children perish quietly under the weight of guilt. It can feel like a crime to be happy after such a death, to take pleasure in a world which was meant to be theirs. But the denial of happiness to self can become a brittle illness over time — harder to heal from than even the deepest of sorrow. There is also the constant responsibility of remembering the departed, and the anxiety around forgetting them. Baba was cremated and I miss going to a specific site with his remains. I once told my friend that she was lucky; she can visit her father's grave anytime. "But do you realise how terrible I feel if I somehow forget to do so on occasions I am meant to?" she replied.

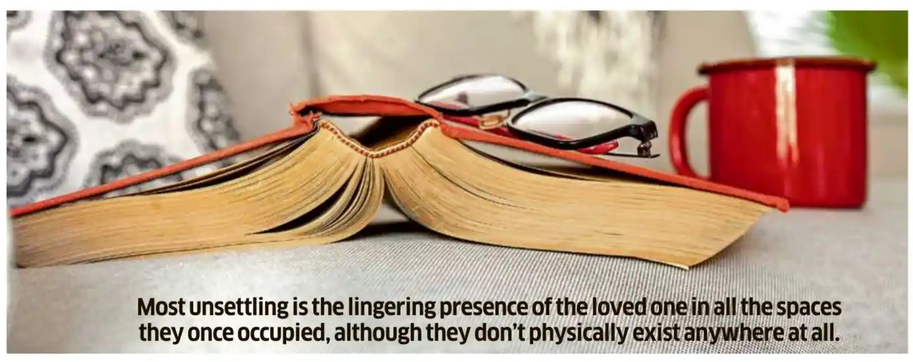
A question of faith

I have often wondered how much of our relationship with death is shaped by religion and faith. Ma and I had gone home for just half an hour in which Baba passed away in the hospital. I of little faith tortured myself for years wondering if he was scared in his last minutes and needed us there. Ma's faith told her that Baba could only leave when we were not by his side and let him go. She accepted this wholeheartedly, while I suffered regret. While funerals in themselves are steeped in methods of severing attachments, the post funeral mourning practices of various religions attempt to build acceptance of death through deliberate processes of letting go, distancing, and closure. Rituals ensure that the bereaved are not left alone, food is shared, and community holds space. A friend whose father had donated his body for medical sciences shared how difficult it was for the family to come to closure with specific rituals.

For some faiths, death is only a moment in a string of occurrences that exemplify the impermanence of life. For some others, it is not a full stop but a semicolon, a crossover from this world to various afterlives that include heavens, judgment days and rebirths. Ma believes her God will hold a lantern to help her get to the other side of Vaitarani — the river between this life and after — where Baba will be waiting for her. When it is difficult to accept an end to existence as we know it, it is easier perhaps to seek refuge in an imagined continuity. For most believers, the possibility of meeting the loved ones again in some form of afterlife eases the weight of the loss. However, atheists and other non-believers have to cope with ideas of non-being and nothingness after death which seems way more challenging.

Amidst our complex relationships with death, perhaps it is a blessing that we continue to mourn forever the death of someone we love. In the ache of that wound, life remains fragile as an evidence of love. The sense of loss is both a witness and a legacy. And while time can never completely heal these wounds, it does make us endure better, become more graceful sufferers.

(This column navigates the various worlds of entangled relationships attempting to celebrate, cope with, and reimagine the meanings of our connections. Arundhati Ghosh is a writer, cultural practitioner, social activist, and traveller. All Our Loves: Journeys with Polyamory in India is her first book in English published by Aleph Book Company in 2025.)


Most unsettling is the lingering presence of the loved one in all the spaces they once occupied, although they don't physically exist anywhere at all.

FEEDBACK
Have something to say? Send your feedback and suggestions to arufeedback @gmail.com

DECODED

Know thy pronouns

What does the word neopronoun mean? Neopronouns refer to gender-neutral pronouns that express a gender identity beyond the conventional she, he or they. These pronouns are used by individuals who wish to express gender neutral or non-binary identities — pronouns such as he, her or they may not necessarily help them express their identities adequately. Some neopronoun examples include thon/thons, ze/hir, ze/zir, and xe/zem, among others. While neopronouns have been slowly changing the way we use language as a marker of gender identity, some of the pronouns are not as 'neo' or new as it is commonly believed. For instance, ze was coined by a writer who went by the initials JWL in the 19th century. Thon is another gender-neutral pronoun that was coined in the 19th century, and was included in the Merriam-Webster dictionary in 1934, only to be removed in the 1960s.

Another set of gender-neutral pronouns or neopronouns used is ae/aer. Ae/aer are pronounced 'a' and 'air'. The ae/aer pronouns are attributed to a 1920 novel called 'A Voyage to Arcturus', written by David Lindsay, a Scottish writer. The pronouns were used in the context of alien beings who were referred to as ae/aer.

Nounselfs are also a kind of gender-neutral pronouns – the style of usage is typically: noun + self. For example, princess and princess self. Nounselfs originated about a decade ago, and became popular on the platform Tumblr.

Curated by Savitha Karthik
*(**Decoded** is a column that demystifies gender concepts and breaks them down into easy-to-understand language.)*

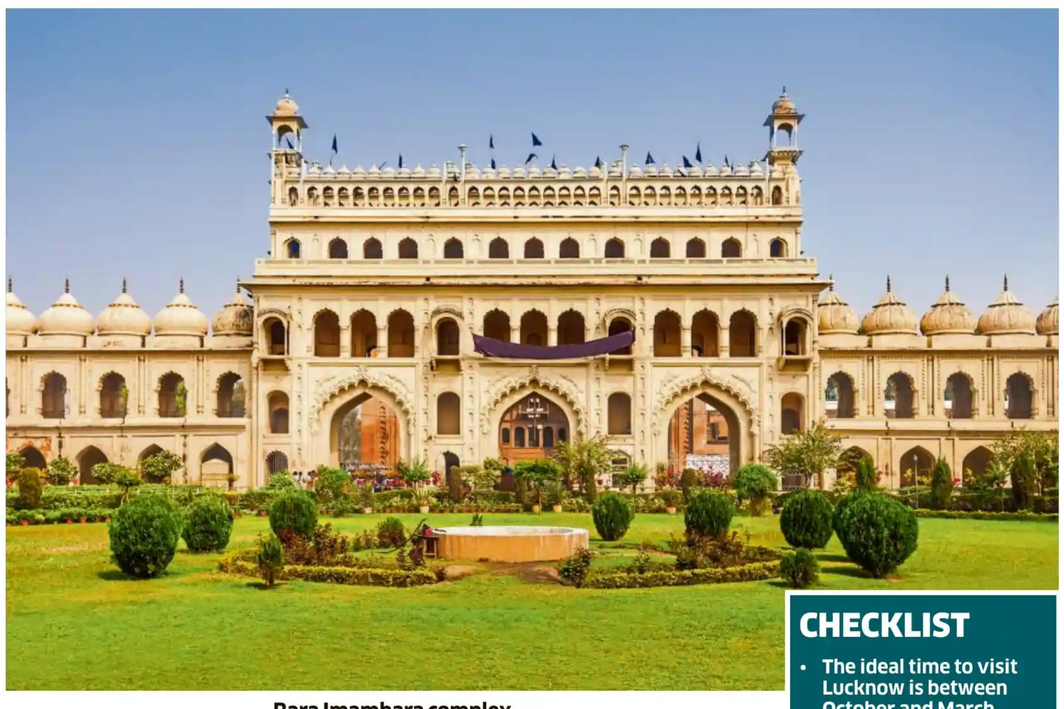
Travel

From going on a Ganj stroll to experiencing the city's famed culture aka tehzeeb, Swati and Sanjay A Pai get a taste of Lucknow, the land of nawabs and kebabs

Tales from Awadh

It was on a cycle-rickshaw that we experienced the famous Lucknowi tehzeeb. A motorcycle speeding madly and about to dangerously cut past us abruptly slows down and allows us to pass — because our driver has raised his left arm and nonchalantly suggested that he be given right of way! This phenomenon happened again and we could see glimpses of the leisurely past in the modernised city (with otherwise chaotic traffic), which is renowned for its nawabs and kebabs.

Nawabs there have been many but it's the name of Asaf-ud-Daulah, the fourth nawab, which stands out as the most important. After all, it was he and his architect, Kifayatullah, who built the structure that is most associated with the city — the Bara Imambara (the bara here means house, thus a congregation hall for people to meet during Muharram). The imambara's reputation is based, in part, on its ornate architecture and more importantly, its dome which is among the largest unsupported domes in the world. The high point of the imambara is the set of narrow corridors, referred to as the Bhul-bhulaiya. A labyrinthine complex in which it is easy to get lost — it is for very good reason that you be accompanied by a guide. A fascinating facet of the nawab is the fact that he commissioned the Imambara so as to offer gainful employment to workers during a famine in the 1780s.


Bara Imambara complex.

Rumi Darwaza

Adjacent to the Bara Imambara is the Rumi Darwaza, also built by the same Nawab. The gate offers a pareidolia — patterns quite appropriate for the city — it clearly resembles the famous chikan embroidery that Lucknow has created. A Chotta Imambara is about 400 metres away and has a hammam, as well. Half-way between the two imambaras is the impressive British-built clock tower with four clocks, all in working condition. Close by is the unfortunately named Satkhanda. Nawab Mohammed Ali Shah planned to build seven storeys (Sat = seven, khanda = floors) but stopped after four floors, in grief, because of the death of his daughter.

From the recesses of our minds, we were able to recollect that Lucknow played a major role in — choose what term you will — the first War of Independence or the Sepoy Mutiny. A walking tour with the knowledgeable Vishal Kaushal took us from Hazratganj, the central business district of Lucknow, to The Residency (the name of the area where the British lived).

En route, a building named Generalwali Kothi, offers the opportunity to view a ten-minute movie on The Residency. The hour or so that it takes to see the well-maintained ruins (an oxymoron) and lawns is well worth the time. Bullet and cannon-ball holes from 1857 in some of the buildings — and also, not unexpectedly, 21st century graffiti on the walls. More signages would also help. Apparently, there is an impressive sound-and-light show, but we saw no activity in the area that evening. An unexpected twist of humour was introduced by a watchman who instructed us not to touch the plaque outside one of the buildings. Attempts to convince him that it was in Braille and was meant to be touched, failed to convince him.

Satkhanda, a four-storey tower, initially envisaged as a seven-storey monument. (PHOTOS BY AUTHOR)

Ganj-ing!

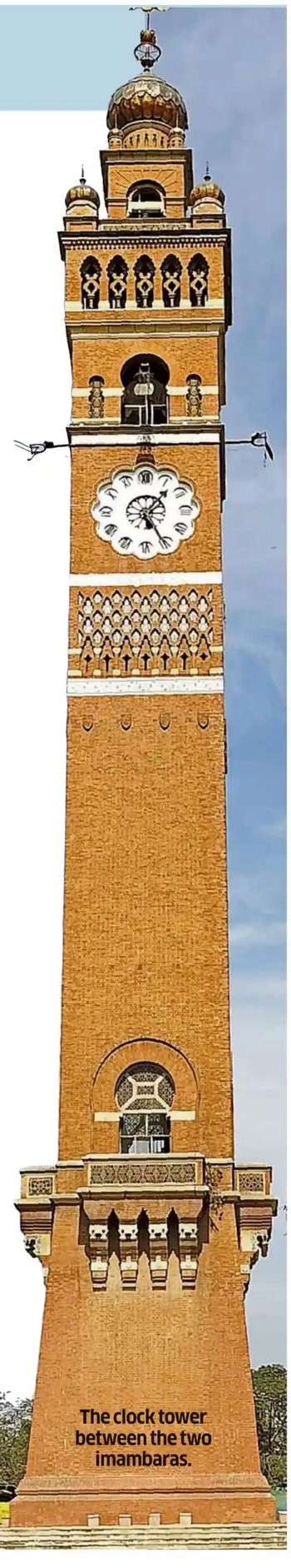
'Ganjing', the accepted term for strolling through Hazratganj, shows buildings with the classic colonial architecture cheek-by-jowl with modern buildings. The ganj and its environs also offer the chance to indulge in the other reason that one visits this city – to eat. And then eat more. Basket chaat, a conglomerate of various chaats is what we recommend in one of the many famous restaurants, Royal Cafe. And the truly melt-in-the-mouth galauti kebab at Mughal's Dastarkhwan or at Tunday Kababi. The rickshaw ride (which gave us the opportunity to practise tehzeeb: we paid the driver rather more than he had quoted) to nearby Aminabad took us to a kulfi in a shop whose owner seems to have been influenced by Henry Ford's mantra, "Any colour that you want, as long as it's black". Prakash ki Mashoor Kulfi, around from 1956, sells only one flavour: kesar-pista.

Small wonder then, that in October 2025, Lucknow was named as a UNESCO creative city of Gastronomy. For a city filled with history art, culture and food, one cannot help but keep up with its tagline, "Muskuraiye...aap Lucknow mein hain."

Lucknow is a foodie's delight, thanks to its chaats, kebabs and kulfis.

CHECKLIST

- The ideal time to visit Lucknow is between October and March. Temperatures begin to rise towards mid April, and may not be conducive for walks.
- Shop for chikankari, the embroidery that Lucknow is well-known for, and ittars (perfume).
- Don't miss the variety of chaats, kebabs and kulfis, when you are walking in the Ganj neighbourhood.
- Opt for one of the heritage walks so you can get an understanding of the city's history and culture.


The clock tower between the two imambaras.

Ginger apple spark (top); Tropical whisper (above), Ironhill India.

Millennials are increasingly opting for zero-proof cocktails and mocktails, apart from healthy bar snacks. Menus now have creative options involving botanical extracts, spices, and bitters, with munchies like sprouts, seed mixes and assorted roasted nuts thrown in, discovers Chanda P Kumar

HIGH ON SOBRIETY

A dragonfruit-based zero-proof cocktail, DoubleTree by Hilton.

This isn't your usual bar table on a Friday night. It's a group of three friends, two of whom are busy scouring the menu for zero-proof cocktails and mocktails. Fortunately, today they don't have to choose between a sugar high and 'virgin' labelled drinks. "We'll have the Sober Picante," says Arun Rao (name changed), ordering the non-alcoholic cocktail that mirrors the classic spicy tequila drink.

In his early 40s, this Bangalore-based supply chain manager had been hooked to the city's favourite weekend ritual of catching up with friends over a drink for over twenty years.

Today, Arun is consciously avoiding alcohol and fried bar snacks. Unlike the Gen Z-led 'Sober Curious' movement, this was a necessary change driven by health concerns. Like him, many millennials in their late 30s and early 40s are increasingly discovering their health report indicating a fatty liver, cholesterol and other lifestyle-related disorders, triggering them to be more intentional in ordering at the bar.

Coconut water matcha latte by SOCIAL.

As Dr Sunil Shenvi, Senior Consultant in GI, HPB & Multiorgan Transplantation at a leading Bengaluru hospital explains, "Metabolic dysfunction-associated fatty liver disease (MAFLD) is part of a bigger cardiometabolic disorder seen predominantly increasing in 35-40 year olds today. Sedentary workstyle, obesity, lack of exercise, unhealthy eating, alcohol and smoking, among other things, are the causes. In fact, in a recent cross-sectional study involving IT employees in Hyderabad, 84.06 per cent employees had increased liver fat accumulation, indicating MAFLD."

While the weekly whisky may be on pause, these consumers are rediscovering nightlife with friends over carefully crafted zero-proof cocktails and lighter bar snacks. Menus are evolving to be more inclusive and receptive to introducing better ingredients, mature flavour profiles, and low-calorie options.

Healthier munchies

A chilled glass of beer is often accompanied by fried bar snacks. But these crispy, salty and indulgent foods do exactly what they are designed for — get you thirsty and dehydrated, leading to another drink that's often alcohol. Today, the bar counters are recognising the need to add guilt-free and low-calorie options to serve up makhana (lotus seed), sprouts, seed mixes and assorted roasted nuts. "We are incorporating millet and legumes in our menu, such as millet crisps to replace potato wafers, and millet tostada with shredded chicken," says Chef Tamoghna Chakraborty of DoubleTree by Hilton Whitefield, which recently opened Captain Chip's Galley, an open-air cocktail venue. The hospitality chain has seen a noticeable 10–15 per cent shift in customer demand towards healthier options.

Bar menus are leaning towards lighter small-plates and street-style snacks such as chaat, Sundal — boiled and tempered chickpeas, sushi rolls and char-grilled options. These easy-to-share bites pair well with drinks, without the guilt of indulging in deep-fried alternatives.

The industry unanimously feels that healthy food is often dismissed as bland, which comes as a great challenge and opportunity for chefs to rethink dishes that are good for the body and taste buds, too.

Mindful menus

'Healthier choices' is the buzzword today, and the food and beverage landscape is responding to cater to this lifestyle change. Slowly but surely, menus are evolving to give weightage to zero-proof cocktails and healthy food pairing. "These zero-proof drinks and light social food options exist on many menus today, but they're often present without being properly positioned. Visibility, not availability, is the current gap," says Suresh Vijayan, Assistant Restaurant Manager at Bangalore's well-known bar Suzy Q.

While the industry is adding dedicated sections, seasonal specials, and appealing titles to menus, there's still a real need for clear labelling, especially when it comes to calories, nutrients, and allergens.

"When I travel to the US, even a visit to some burger joints comes with clear nutritional information on calories, protein content, and more. That level of transparency is still largely absent in India. And even if they do, there remains the larger question of credibility. Without strong control and monitoring mechanisms, can we be sure the numbers truly reflect what's on the plate? The same uncertainty applies to claims such as 'organic', where the label exists, but verification often does not," Dr Shenvi says.

COOKING DILEMMA

A method to the masalas

Adding spices at a specific point of the cooking process makes a difference to how the recipe turns out. If you are using whole spices like cardamom, cinnamon or bay leaf, for instance, it is better to add them to hot oil, butter or ghee at the beginning so that the flavours are released. This process is called blooming. Adding powdered spices to a meal? It's better to add powders at the mid stage of cooking — when you add powdered spices at the very beginning, chances of them getting burnt are higher. You can add the powders after you "bloom" the whole spices. Powdered spices such as garam masala need to be cooked in oil briefly to ensure there's no raw taste.

Aromatic herbs such as parsley, coriander, mint or dill are better off added at the end of cooking – if you were to simmer them, the flavours are lost. However, there are herbs like rosemary, sage or oregano which work well when you add them at the beginning because they tend to release their flavours slowly. As a rule of thumb, whole spices and dried herbs first, powdered spices next and fresh herbs at the end is good to follow.

Curated by Savitha Karthik

*(**Cooking Dilemma** answers that one question which pops up when you are about to try out a recipe and didn't know whom to ask.)*

ZERO-PROOF COCKTAILS

Zero-proof or non-alcoholic craft cocktails are all the rage today. Crafted with similar mixology techniques but blending botanical extracts, spices, bitters, and even non-alcoholic spirits, the new-age zero-proof cocktails come with grown-up flavours, topped with theatrics that rival their alcoholic counterparts.

"We are seeing more guests opt out of alcohol altogether on certain days. Our zero-proof and low-sugar beverage programme offers the same sense of craft, presentation, and flavour depth as our cocktails," says Arun Kumar, Beverage Head, Ironhill India, a popular brewery that now serves refreshing low-sugar mocktails crafted from coconut water, chia seeds to ginger syrup for a unique twist.

"I'm not fond of sweet, fruity cocktails or mocktails. I usually stick to salted fresh lime or other muted flavours. Still, I'm very excited to try innovative, well-crafted zero-proof cocktails, now that I'm staying away from alcohol," says Dinesh Atteery. The Dubai-based business development manager, who is a frequent visitor to Bengaluru, adds that the city's evolving craft-cocktail scene intrigues him far more than Dubai's binge-drinking culture.

This new breed of health-conscious diners has also created opportunities for mixologists to innovate, experiment with native ingredients and flavours such as amla, chukku (dried ginger), peppercorn and turmeric too. Also popular are natural tisanes (herbal infusions) such as hibiscus and clitoria tisanes, which add vibrant colour and flavour to replace sugar-loaded syrups. "When someone orders a Cold Fashioned or a Khus & Chilli at SOCIAL, they're choosing flavour and mood, not opting out," shares Jones Elish, Beverage Head, Impresario Entertainment and Hospitality Pvt Ltd.

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A museum that's WORTH THE WAIT

After more than two decades of delays and crises, the Grand Egyptian Museum finally opened, recasting how one of the world's oldest civilisations tells its story, says Christina Khalil

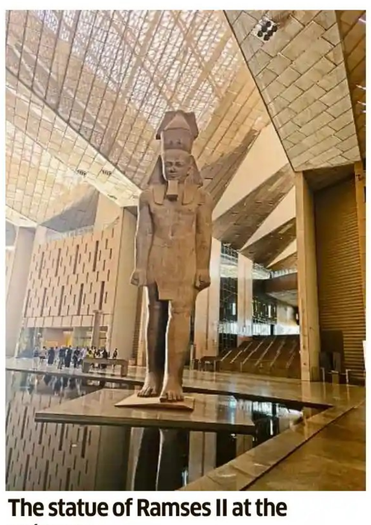
It was the museum that few believed would ever be built. The foundation stone was laid in 2002, but 23 years and three presidents later, amidst a revolution, soaring costs, a fire, and even a global pandemic, the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) was finally inaugurated in November 2025.

"It's taken nearly as long to complete as the Great Pyramid of Giza itself," our guide reminds us.

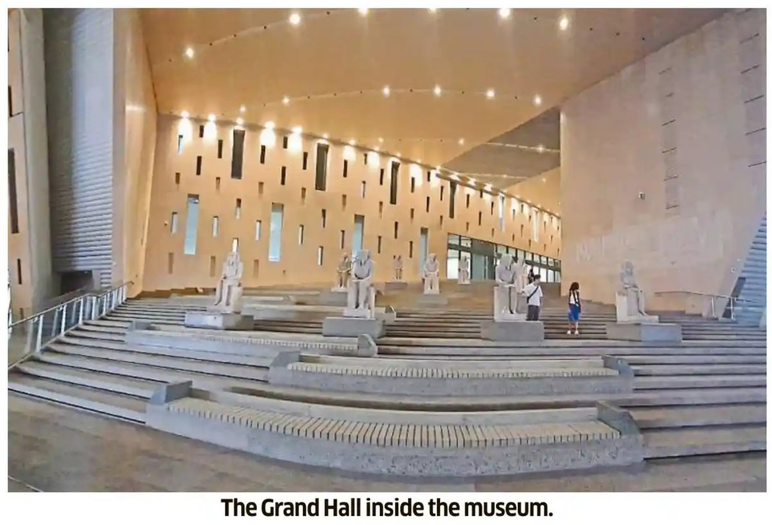
What strikes you first is the scale. The museum stands in Egyptian alabaster, glass and steel across the vast desert plateau. In the distance, the Obelisk of Ramses II rises against the Cairo skyline. Together, they form a gateway to the Great Sphinx of Giza and the pyramids beyond.

But the building is more than an architectural masterpiece. It marks a shift in how Egypt presents its 7,000-year-old civilisation, both to the world and to itself.

The excitement in the air is unmistakable. "It's the greatest thing they've built since the pyramids," a fellow traveller says as we walk to the entrance.



The statue of Ramses II at the entrance.



The Grand Hall inside the museum.

MUSEUM MATTERS

Stepping inside GEM

Inside the atrium, that ambition is reaffirmed. A colossal Ramses II statue looms into view, opposite the statues of a Ptolemaic king and queen recovered from the sunken city of Thonis-Heracleion.

The 36-foot-tall Ramses II statue was originally erected in Memphis. Later, it was moved to Ramses Square in central Cairo, where it stood for the next five decades. In 2006, it was transported to the new museum in a grand procession, as crowds lined the streets to watch its journey.

It became a powerful symbol of the nationwide effort behind the museum itself.

Yet it is the grand staircase that steals the spotlight. Lined with over 60 monumental statues, it is divided into four themes, showcasing royal power, religious architecture, the relationship between rulers and gods, and the journey to eternity.

The obelisk tip of Queen Hatshepsut.

Among the treasures are the seated statue of King Thutmose III, the Sphinx of Amenemhat III, the obelisk tip of Queen Hatshepsut, Amenhotep III beside Re-Horakhty, and the trinity of Ramses II with the god Ptah and the goddess Sekhmet.

At the top, a vast window frames the Great Pyramid of Khufu itself. That is our first view of the pyramids, which remain in the background of the 100,000 artefacts displayed here. It forms a visual bridge connecting the museum to the past.

Then the galleries begin.

History by the gallery

Given its immense scale, the museum has opened in stages. Twelve galleries currently display exhibits from 700,000 BCE to the 4th century AD, weaving together themes of society, kingship and belief through stories of daily life, rulership and religion. Visitors encounter everything from Stone Age tools and the haunting gaze of Scribe Nefer to the royal treasures of Queen Hetepheres, the fully recreated tomb chapel of Khnumhotep II, and a colossal Hatshepsut statue in the corridors. Yet the greatest anticipation surrounds the galleries dedicated to Tutankhamun and the Solar Boats of Khufu.

For the first time, the entire collection of more than 5,000 objects from Tutankhamun's tomb will be displayed together. Many of them, including Tutankhamun's iconic death mask, coffins and sarcophagi, military chariots and throne chair, were previously displayed at the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities in Tahrir Square.

Some had not been displayed since their discovery by archaeologist Howard Carter in 1922.

They are being restored in the museum's Conservation Centre, now regarded as among the most advanced archaeological restoration facilities in the world.

It is hoped that the country's many treasures, currently displayed in museums around the world, will someday return here as well.

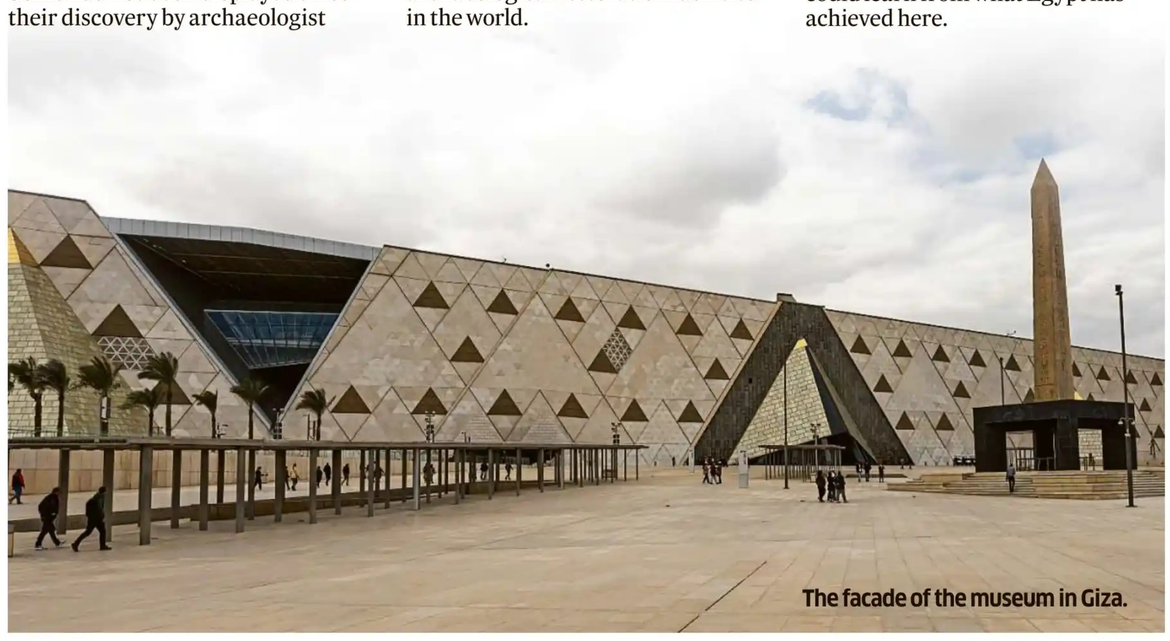
Yet the museum is not only about preservation. It is a cultural campus too. Restaurants, gardens, a cinema hall, a children's museum and a specialised Egyptology library are part of the complex.

We stop at Zooba, a restaurant that has brought Cairo street food into the museum. Over hawawshi, flatbread stuffed with spiced minced meat, ancient and modern Egypt meet at our table.

Expected to host 15,000 visitors daily, the Grand Egyptian Museum is today the largest archaeological museum in the world. But it will not replace the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities in Tahrir Square or the newer National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation. Both will continue to present Egypt's history. The GEM, however, creates an overarching, modern layer that connects the other two.

As India's own Yuge Yugeen Bharat Museum prepares to open to the world in 2026, presenting 5,000 years of Indian history from the Indus Valley Civilisation to modern India, it is a reminder that nations everywhere are rethinking how they tell the story of their past.

It may even surpass the Grand Egyptian Museum as the largest museum devoted to a single civilisation. But in ambition and storytelling, it could learn from what Egypt has achieved here.



The facade of the museum in Giza.

PAWS & LIFE

Revelling in the comfort of the ordinary

Dogs instinctively recognise that consistency provides safety. That tail-thumping excitement isn't merely adorable; it's affected by chemistry and biology alike, writes Nalini Sorensen

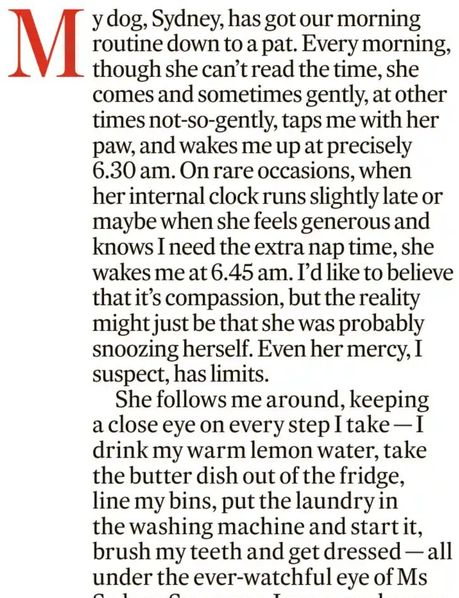
My dog, Sydney, has got our morning routine down to a pat. Every morning, though she can't read the time, she comes and sometimes gently, at other times not-so-gently, taps me with her paw, and wakes me up at precisely 6.30 am. On rare occasions, when her internal clock runs slightly late or maybe when she feels generous and knows I need the extra nap time, she wakes me at 6.45 am. I'd like to believe that it's compassion, but the reality might just be that she was probably snoozing herself. Even her mercy, I suspect, has limits.

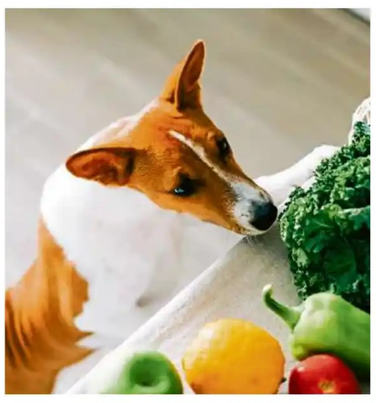
She follows me around, keeping a close eye on every step I take — I drink my warm lemon water, take the butter dish out of the fridge, line my bins, put the laundry in the washing machine and start it, brush my teeth and get dressed — all under the ever-watchful eye of Ms Sydney Sorensen. I swear no human being has ever observed me with the kind of focus Sydney has before her morning walk. Not even during a job interview.

She stations herself strategically in our kitchen, just in case the butter dish produces a morning miracle; she escorts me to our laundry room, in case I forget where it is; she supervises my toothbrushing in ways that would make my dentist proud. It's a full audit. No shortcuts. No room for error.

And then, that magic moment.

As soon as I put my sandals on and grab our house keys, she goes completely nuts. "It's walky time!" she seems to shout with every tail wag, yelp, and enthusiastic dance move around my feet. The sheer delight is palpable and so apparent. I can't help but smile, even as I type this out. There is something so wonderfully humbling about being the gatekeeper to someone else's joy.





Joy can be found in quiet repetitions.

Here's the thing: it is exactly the same routine each morning. Same lemon water. Same bins. Same sandals. Same street we've walked on a hundred times before. And yet, she greets it with such pure, unbridled joy, as though this morning's walk might be the greatest adventure of her life.

Somewhere along the way, I realised that this predictable, almost boring morning routine brings me just as much joy. I might not bark and run around in circles (though let's not rule it out entirely), but it does. There's a comfort in it. There's a quiet sense of being anchored before the world begins demanding things from me, before the sun belts its full heat down on me. Most importantly, before the day gathers momentum with email pings, WhatsApp forwards, and headlines that jar my senses.

It made me wonder if there was any science to it.

Predictable routines are good for both dogs and humans!

And, guess what? There sure is.

Predictable routines lower our stress hormones. Familiarity signals safety to the brain. Repeated positive interactions — like a daily walk with someone who thinks you are the centre of the universe — can increase oxytocin, the "bonding hormone." Small, repeated, simple pleasures calm the mind and regulate the nervous system. Who knew that lining the bins and putting on sandals could be part of a wellness practice?

Dogs instinctively understand what we often forget: consistency feels safe. Anticipation of something good — like a walk — can be just as powerful as the walk itself. That tail-thumping excitement isn't just cute; it's chemistry. No, maybe it's biology wrapped in fur.

In a world that feels increasingly unpredictable, Sydney has chosen to find ecstasy in the ordinary. Same leash. Same pavement. Same trees. Same friends being waved to along the way. And every morning, she approaches it as if life has just handed her a winning lottery ticket.

Maybe that's the real lesson.

Joy doesn't always arrive in grand gestures or life-altering milestones. Sometimes it shows up in the quiet repetition of things that anchor us. In lemon water. In clean laundry. In the jingle-jangle of keys. In a dog that believes that today's walk is the most important event in human history.

Sydney may not read the clock. But she reads something far more important — the rhythm of our life together. And every morning, with a paw pat to my arm and an uncontainable tail wag, she reminds me that there is extraordinary comfort in the beautifully ordinary.

The writer is an award-winning children's author who loves dogs, children, and books — the order changes daily. Write to her at nalinisorensen @gmail.com

Paws & Life *is a monthly column that reflects on how our pets shape the way we live, love, and learn.*

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